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...kala Mahotsava, Bhuj, and the life and art of the people of Kutch.



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## Ancient Indian Music and the Concept of Man

Mukund Lath

### Introduction

Music does not embody concepts. It cannot. Only language embodies concepts. Yet we are surely tempted to ask: How is change in musical form related to change in the concept of man from one epoch to another? Or, in other words, do changes in musical forms bear any intimate relation with changes in ideas concerning man: his nature, his place in the world, his goals?

Before we can attempt any answer to this question, a tricky problem intrudes: How are we to correlate change in musical forms with change in concepts? Can there be a yardstick that can gauge relative change with any right and fair degree of dispassion? Let me put the question in another way: Can we, on hearing a piece of music or a corpus of musical forms, have an idea of the concept of man that the music implies or assumes? The answer, I think, has to be a 'No' unless we take extra-musical factors like words that are sung or the lore surrounding music into account. Conversely, can we, on becoming familiar with the concept of man held by certain musicians, or even certain cultures or epochs, come to know the forms of music they might have created? I doubt if this is possible. Let me take an example: The Renaissance in Europe was an age when the entire spirit of the times, both in thought and art, was so profoundly influenced by classical ideals that a student who knew the general character of the Renaissance, but not its music, might expect a similar manifestation in music too. Yet Renaissance musical forms, unlike painting, sculpture and thought, show no Greek traits. They are basically different. Greek music was melodic, while Renaissance music is polyphonic and harmonic. Let us take another example that is closer to us and, therefore, more telling perhaps. Concepts of man have certainly undergone many changes in India over the last two centuries, within which time a whole new epoch has dawned. Yet, do we see a similar transformation in music? We do not. Many people, indeed, complain that music has not changed to suit the modern outlook and ethos.

Let us also look at the matter from another angle: Are profound changes in music accompanied by analogous changes in concepts and weltanschauung? Polyphony was introduced in Europe in the ninth century and, by the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, it gradually replaced the earlier monodic music. No change could be more profound in musical history. But do we perceive a similar change in the concept of man? We do not. The great change from the pagan to the Christian ethos had already taken place centuries earlier, and Europe, from the fifth to the ninth centuries, continued to create within the monodic system it had inherited. No doubt there were transformations: the introduction of new forms and a new spirit, but they were minor compared with the fundamental change that came about with polyphony. One can see no change in the European world of thought which could be associated with this basic change in music.

Now let us take an example from India. During the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries there was a change in Indian music with the introduction of the *thāta-melakartā* system which superseded the earlier *grāma-murchhanā* scheme. Accompanying this change in theory was the introduction of the *tānpūrā* as the drone.<sup>1</sup> The historical outlines of this change remain vague in comparison with what we know from Europe. This is because music-history in India is hazy in comparison with music-history in Europe. Yet the occurrence of a major change is beyond doubt. But it is difficult to think of a parallel change, during the period, in the concept of man or in the concepts held by men which can, in a relevant sense, be said to have accompanied the change in music. True, this was a period of great political upheaval when the old order was being shattered to give way to a new set-up. But the moot point is: With what, in this change, can we connect a change in music? I cannot think of any element or conjunction of elements which one can define with any certainty. Islam certainly brought with it many new movements of thought and culture and art. The influence of these on poetry, painting, architecture and social institutions is explicit enough. But the new influence hardly provides any perspective for understanding the change in music. Even the fact that there was a great infusion of new forms in the wake of the conquest does not really afford a satisfactory explanation for this change. For Islamic music is not drone-dominated. Moreover, the change that occurred was nowhere as drastic as the change from monody to polyphony. What happened can, I think, be best characterised as a rearrangement of old forms around a new fulcrum, the drone. No amount of infusion of new forms, let alone a change in weltanschauung, can explain this phenomenon. A greater change in weltanschauung occurred in Indian history with the advent of the British rule. European ideas and ideals; yet all this left music unaffected.

What I have said was intended as a brief cautionary preface to any attempt at understanding music in relation to concepts. I do not mean to deny that many major, enduring movements and currents in music can be fruitfully understood in the perspective of major movements in ideas and cultural ethos. Let me illustrate this in relation to *sāma* and some later currents in musical culture. Before I proceed I must stress the fact that we cannot really explain the forms which *sāma* and later music took from what we know of the Vedic and later concepts of man and his place in the world. But the lore surrounding music and the ideas held about music can certainly illuminate important aspects of Indian musical culture. It can help us understand concepts and attitudes about music even if it does not really explain its forms. Attitudes to music, the concepts we hold about its value and nature, create the ethos and ambience in which music is made. Understanding them is important for an understanding of the musical culture within which forms are created, cherished and preserved, if not of the forms themselves.

#### Sāma Music

For the Vedic people, *sāma* music, like the Vedic *mantra*, was not created but revealed, *dr̥ṣṭa*; also, like the Vedic *mantra*, it was immutable: not a syllable could be changed in a *mantra* and not a note in the *sāma stotra*. Like the *mantra*, *sāma* was associated with *yajña*. Inherent in the Vedic concept of *yajña* was an idea of cosmic co-functioning and reciprocity: through *yajña*, gods and men enter into a relation of give and take.

The image of the cosmos that emerges from Vedic concepts is that of an organic whole consisting of discrete parts functioning reciprocally in unison. I would like in this context to relate a story from a *Brāhmaṇa* text, the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, belonging to the *Jaiminīya śākhā* of the *Sāmaveda*.<sup>2</sup> The story concerns a dispute for supremacy among six gods: Agni, Vāyu, Āditya, Prāṇa, Anna and Vāk. Each stakes his claims with arguments. Agni says: 'I am the mouth of the gods. And of men. To me are given the *yajña* offerings. I distribute food to gods and men. Without me gods and men would remain without a mouth with which to feed themselves. There would be no *yajña* offerings and consequently no food for gods and men. The whole purpose of existence will be defeated. Nothing will remain.' All gave assent to Agni's words. Without him, they all agreed, nothing would remain. Then Vāyu spoke: 'I am the *prāṇa*, the breath of life in the gods. And in men. If I go away, life, too, shall be washed away. Without me all will be defeated and nothing will remain.' All gave assent to Vāyu's words too. Without him, they agreed, nothing would remain.

The other gods argued in a similar vein till each saw the truth of the other's claim. They saw that each was dependent on the other, and without any one of them the whole would be defeated<sup>3</sup>

एकैकामेवानु स्मः । स यन्नु नः सर्वासं  
देवतानामेकचन न स्यात् तत इदं सर्वं पराभवेत् ।

This mode of reciprocal functioning, with each part performing its innate function, was, in the Vedic view, what made the whole cosmos exist and move. The true, inherent rhythm of this movement, a rhythm which made everything fall in its proper place and season (*ṛtu*) was *ṛta*. Man was as much part of the *ṛta* as were the gods: both interdependent on each other, acting as it were, as counterpoints to each other. Indeed, the Vedic conception of the cosmos readily brings to mind the image of an orchestra playing different melodies to produce a single harmony.

This conception was reflected in the performance of the *yajña* ritual too. It was a ritual performed by a group of priests with different functions, acting in unison. Part of the *ritual* in the more important *yajña*-s was the singing of hymns to the gods. This was done by the *sāma* priests, who sang *ṛca*-s from the *Rigveda* to music, which (like the *ṛca*-s themselves) was revealed and transcendental. *Sāma* itself was sung by a group of three singers, the *prastotā*, the *pratihartā*, the *udgātṛ*, often aided by a number of subsidiary singers, the *upagātṛ*-s. To each of the three main singers was assigned a different part of the five-or seven-part *sāma* structure. One of the parts was sung by two musicians separately. The finale was sung by all together.

Connected with the Vedic concept of *ṛta* was the notion of what has been termed cosmic correspondences. Everything in this world, however seemingly disparate, had an inner mystic correspondence with other things, a correspondence which is often spoken of as a relation of identity. Every part of the *yajña* ritual had a cosmic correspondence which often also provided its *raison d'être*. Similarly, every element in the human microcosm had its correspondent in the macrocosm. The *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* texts are full of such correspondences. I would like to quote here an example that concerns *sāma*. A *sāma*, we have said, could be sung in seven parts; these were the seven *bhakti*-s: *hīṅkāra*; *prastāva*; *ādi* (or *pranava*); *udgītha*; *pratihāra*; *upadrava*; and *nidhana*.



The *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* speaks of a relation of identity between these *bhakti*-s and various aspects of the cosmos. Thus each *bhakti* is said to correspond to a different quarter in space: *hiṅkāra* is the east, *prastāva* the south, *ādi* the west, *udgītha* the north, *pratihāra* is that quarter, *upadrava* is the *antarikṣa* and *nidhana* is this quarter.<sup>4</sup> Another passage says: *hiṅkāra* is Mind, *prastāva* is Speech, *udgītha* is *Prāṇa*, the life-breath, *hiṅkāra* is the Moon, *prastāva* is Fire, *udgītha* is *Āditya*, the Sun, and so on.<sup>5</sup> At another place we find: *hiṅkāra* is the season of spring, *prastāva* is summer, *udgītha* is the season of rain, *pratihāra* autumn, and *nidhana* winter.<sup>6</sup> It is worth mentioning in parenthesis that this ancient feeling for correspondence has echoes in our own assigning of different seasons to different *rāga*-s. The idea that different musical forms could correspond to different hours of the day has also an ancient parallel, for another passage reads: *hiṅkāra* is the hour before sunrise, *prastāva* is the hour of the half-risen sun, *ādi* is the hour when cows set forth for pasture, the midday is *udgītha*, *pratihāra* is the afternoon, *upadrava* the hours of dusk when the sky becomes red, and *nidhana* the hour when the sun has set.<sup>7</sup>

The ancient Vedic concept of man and his relation to gods and the world was clearly a concept of mutuality and innate interrelationships. Given this concept, one would reasonably expect its expression in music to be in the form of polyphony. There was even the presence of group singing. And yet from all accounts and evidence, the music was monodic. Indeed, all subsequent music history in India, which avowedly begins with *sāma* is a history of monodic music. But music could quite conceivably have taken an entirely different form right from the Vedic period.

Perhaps even more than the forms of *sāma*, the Vedic attitude to *sāma* has played a crucial role in subsequent musical history. The Vedic regard for *sāma* shines out bright and clear from all their deliberations. It shines out even from the little we have quoted, and that, too, from a single text. *Sāma*, for the ancients, was an essential element in the ritual process and consequently an essential element in the total harmony of the world. Through *sāma* one could participate in *rta*.

Through it one could also attain *amṛta*, supreme immortal being. It could lead one to *brahma*, the highest truth and knowledge, and it could be the source of *rasa*, the greatest bliss. In the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, the *gāyatra sāma* is identified with the mystic syllable 'Om', which is supreme *brahma*.<sup>8</sup> 'Om' is the foundation on which the world stands. A legend related in this *Brāhmaṇa* reports a question which *Prthu*, son of *Vena*, asked of the divine *vrātya*-s: the heavens, he said in a verse, rest on *Sūrya*, the *Sūrya* on *Prthvī* and the *Prthvī* on *Āpah*, the primal waters. On what, he asked, do these waters rest? 'Om' was the answer.<sup>9</sup> This *gāyatra sāma* is elsewhere in the *Brāhmaṇa* identified with *amṛta*:<sup>10</sup> तदेतदमृतं गायत्रम् । एतेन वै प्रजापतिरमृतत्वमगच्छत् । एतेन देवाः । एतेन र्षयः ॥ *Gāyatra* is the instrument by which the noose of death can be loosened.<sup>11</sup>

*Sāma* is, therefore, an *upāsana*: a path to ultimate realisation. *Āruṇi* asked *Vasiṣṭha* *Caikitāneya* as to which god he worshipped. "We worship *sāma*," was the proud answer: *Agni*, *Prthvī*, the primal waters (*āpah*), the *antarikṣa*, the heavens, he added, were all but aspects of *sāma*.<sup>12</sup>

*Sāma*, then, was cherished with the greatest esteem that the Vedic people harboured for what they valued. One could, however, object here that *sāma*

was not prized for its music but for the *ṛk mantra*-s, the really cherished possessions of which the *sāma* music was no more than a vehicle. This was not so, for *sāma* was a revealed form in its own right, just as the *ṛca*-s. Further, in many cases, *sāma* was valued for music alone. An example is that of the *anṛca sāma*. *Anṛca sāma* was a form of *sāma* that had no *ṛk* base and was sung to meaningless syllables. A story speaks of its transcendental powers. The gods coveted heaven. But try as they might, they could not attain their goal. Frustrated, they went to *Prajāpati* for advice. *Prajāpati* told them that they could attain *svarga*, the heavenly world of light, through *anṛca sāma*. The gods, therefore, emptied the *sāma* of its *mantra* content and through it attained *svarga*.<sup>13</sup>

*Aśarīra sāma* was perhaps another name for *anṛca sāma* (for the *ṛk* has been called the *śarīra* of *sāma* in the above story). A legend, seemingly historical, tells of the great occult powers of *aśarīra sāma*. *Kaupyea Uccaiṣravā*, the king of *Kurus*, was a close and dear friend of the *Keśi Dārḥya*, the king of *Panchala*. *Uccaiṣravā* died, leaving *Dārḥya* sad and sorrowful. Once, when *Dārḥya* had gone out hunting, he saw *Uccaiṣravā* in the woods. *Dārḥya* tried to embrace his friend. But *Uccaiṣravā* was like empty space or the insubstantial wind; he was disembodied. *Dārḥya* could not touch him. "What has happened to your body and form?" he asked his friend. In reply *Uccaiṣravā* spoke of the *aśarīra sāma*: the power of this *sāma*, he said, had removed from him the dross of flesh and he was now a disembodied spirit. Through *aśarīra sāma*, he said, a man could attain the abode of gods. He asked *Dārḥya* to look for a *brāhmaṇa* who knew this *sāma*. For it was through this *sāma* that the gods themselves had become disembodied spirits. *Dārḥya* searched everywhere in his kingdom but found none who knew this *sāma*. Then one day he met a *brāhmaṇa* named *Prāṭṛda Bhālla* who lived in a *śmaśāna* (a cemetery). *Prāṭṛda Bhālla* was an expert in *aśarīra sāma*. The *śarīra sāma*, the *sāma* sung to *ṛca*-s, he said, was within the reach of death, but *aśarīra sāma* was *amṛta* (*atha yadaśarīram tadamṛtam*). Finally, through the power of this *sāma*, *Bhālla* turned *Dārḥya* into a disembodied god.<sup>14</sup>

The story illustrates the ancients' belief in the power of music alone in certain of its forms. Music was for them capable of becoming the path divine. It was perhaps practised in this capacity within certain esoteric circles as the association of *Prāṭṛda Bhālla* within the *śmaśāna* suggests. This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that *Bhālla*, according to the story, was opposed by the more 'regular' *sāma* singers of *Dārḥya*'s kingdom. I would here like to note in passing that this legend is the earliest precursor, that I know of, of the later stories about the occult powers that certain musicians such as *Tansen* possessed, and similar powers inherent in certain musical forms, such as the *rāga* *Dipaka*.

### The *Sanyāsī* Ideal

I have tried to stress the Vedic people's regard for music at some length because this early attitude struck deep roots in the Indian psyche and kept the impulse to music alive under certain overwhelming pressures. The attacks came from what may be called the *sanyāsī* weltanschauung that had its source in a very ancient

*muni* or *śramaṇa* tradition, but which grew to overpower the Indian mind in the epoch which produced great *sanyāsī*-s like the Buddha, Mahāvīra and a host of lesser, though cumulatively very influential, teachers. The Vedic fold itself was moved by the *sanyāsī* ideal and the older ideal of *yajña* and *ṛta* lost its vigour and vitality. This ideal was now on the defensive and was being metamorphosed by the incorporation of new elements, many of which were quite alien to its former spirit.

Music had no place in the *sanyāsī* weltanschauung. The world in this view was nothing but misery, *duḥkha*. Man was bound to the world by desire and he was bound to suffer in an endless cycle of births as long as this bondage lasted. Liberation lay in transcending the world to *nirvāṇa* or *mokṣa*, where alone was bliss. The road to *nirvāṇa* led away from the lure of the senses and its objects which tied man to the world through desire. Every temptation that shackled man to the world was to be shunned. This included music, for music fed the sensual fire. The ban on music encompassed all music, for music was an intoxicant by nature.

In practice, however, music in some of its forms was accepted. No ideal, however austere and music-shunning, ever totally rejects music when translated into a large cultural movement. But the only function that music could rightly have was to act as a vehicle for words which expressed the *sanyāsī* experience and ideal. Music, in its pure forms, too, was certainly tolerated, for many who were moved by the *sanyāsī* ideal were, no doubt, moved by music too; but music was, in the ultimate analysis, an intruder in this world. To the Vedic people, music could be an *upāsana*, a path divine; now it was fuel for *vāsanā*, the path of eternal misery.

It is easy to see why we hear of no distinctive Buddhist or Jain music. There was no true impulse for music in the Buddhist or Jain ethos. Yet this world view had important consequences in music history. For, like the Vedic weltanschauung, the *sanyāsī* ethos, too, exercised a deep influence on the Indian mind. The presence of these two contrary attitudes was bound to produce a tension and ambivalence that has left its stamp in the history of all subsequent musical culture.

#### Gāndharva

After the age of *sāma*, music found its next great creative impulse in the theistic cults of Vaishnavism and Shaivism. These cults had grown from small beginnings in the Vedic age, and had imbibed and amalgamated much from different strands of worship and thought current in the subsequent period of spiritual and intellectual ferment through which they grew. These cults claimed to embody the essence of the Vedas. This could be questioned, for there was much that was new in them, and what there was of the old was much transformed. Yet much of the Vedic spirit did abide in them, though in new garbs. Just as for the Vedic people, ritual in these cults was a vital element and music was vital for the ritual. But the ritual had much that was new in form and ethos. So had the music.

The new sacred form or corpus of music, created in the devotional atmosphere of the cults, was *gāndharva*. It was dedicated to the worship of gods, specially Shiva. *Gāndharva*, the ancient texts say, was metamorphosed from the

*sāma* gamut of forms. It was also cherished and valued in an analogous manner both as ritual and as a form spiritual. Like *sāma*, *gāndharva* was believed to be revealed music. It was created not by man but by Brahma, Lord of Creation. It was, therefore, immutable, like *sāma*. Also, like *sāma*, it could become the path divine, and lead the devotee to the presence of his deity if performed correctly and in the true spirit.

Yet the *gāndharva* form had also much that was quite distinct from *sāma*. Firstly, it was not designed for a group of singers but a single expert vocalist. Secondly, a new element, *tāla*, as a pattern of beats played along with the melody, became part of the music in *gāndharva*. Let me explain what was new in this. *Sāma* music consisted of melody alone, which was mainly vocal with perhaps accompaniment on certain kinds of *viṇā*. This melody must surely have contained an inbuilt rhythm, perhaps even marked rhythmic cycles—since it was often set to fixed metric patterns. But it had nothing analogous to what is common today, that is, a scheme of beats rendered independently of the melody (on an instrument such as the drum or the cymbal or the *ektārā* etc.) with which the melody is synthesized. Thirdly, improvisation in some form was now introduced. This must have been extremely limited and restricted, but it was certainly a new element. Also, now we have for the first time the notion of a *rāga*. The *jāti*-s, which were *gāndharva* melodies, evince characteristics that are *rāga*-like. Indeed, they are said to have been the seed-bed of all the later *rāga* forms.

*Gāndharva* is clearly important in subsequent musical history as the form which was the fountain-head of much later developments. But it is no less important in respect to the spirit behind it and the attitude it represented towards music.

Interestingly, many medieval manuals of music, dating from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries and even later, begin with a defence of music, justifying it as an act worthy of practice. Such a defence was thought necessary by the authors of these manuals in view of the many strictures against music recorded in the law-codes: the *Smṛti*-s and the *Purāṇa*-s. The *Smṛti*-s are often very harsh in their disapproval of music and musicians, indeed of performing arts and artistes in general. Sacred functions and rituals were forbidden for persons who earned their livelihood through music, dance or theatre. The men and women of this class were considered so immoral that the *Smṛti*-s did not allow them to live within city walls in order to save the inhabitants from sinful contamination. Naturally, therefore, any respectable scholar setting out to write a serious treatise concerning music had to justify the art before proceeding to describe it in all its forms and techniques.

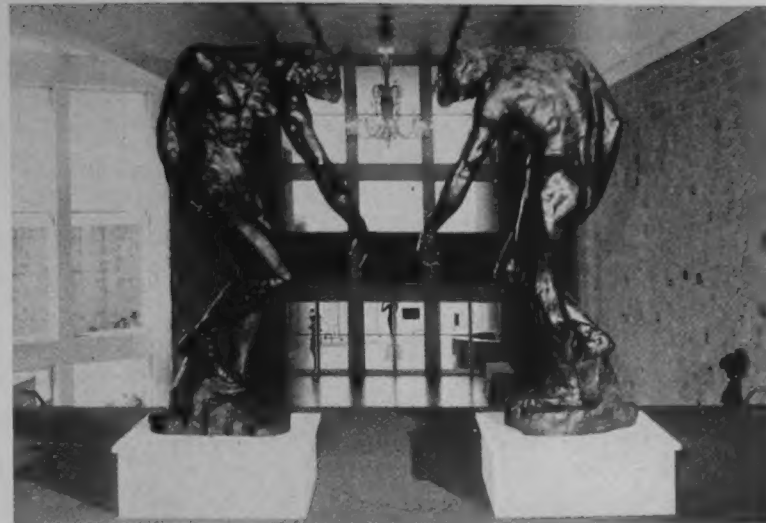
The reason for the puritan attitude of the *Smṛti*-s towards music may be traced to the profound influence on Indian thought of the *sanyāsī* world view. However, the concept of music as an *upāsana* was also deep-rooted, and this provided the *saṅgīta* manuals with their defence of music. The manual writers could indeed quote passages from the *Smṛti*-s and *Purāṇa*-s themselves which embodied the idea of music as the vehicle for the sacred. One oft-quoted passage was an extolment of *gāndharva* from the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, where *gāndharva* forms were noted as leading to Shiva himself. The *bhakti* movement, echoes of which continue till today, also, in its own way, adopted music as an *upāsana*: addressing God through songs, singing his names, his glory, was a major aspect

of *bhakti* worship. The Lord Himself is quoted in the *Purāṇa*-s as telling Nārada, the supreme *bhakta*: 'I live not in *Vaikuṇṭha* or the hearts of *Yogī*-s, I am where my *bhakta*-s sing.' Naturally, the music manuals found in this and similar passages are a major authoritative argument in favour of music.

\* \* \*

#### REFERENCES:

1. The exact date or even century when the *tānpūrā* was introduced, is still a matter of debate and conjecture. The *tānpūrā* was certainly present in the seventeenth century, as miniature paintings indicate. It may have been introduced earlier. However, even if its actual use came after the sixteenth century, the new music within which its use became so crucial and almost 'logical' was a product of the period between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.
2. In what follows I rely almost exclusively on the *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* for my thoughts regarding *sāma* and Vedic views in general. What I have said can, I believe, be corroborated from other sources. But I have not done so here. One reason for my exclusive attention to the *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* is to project the importance of this text in music history, an importance hardly as yet noticed. My references are to the Tirupati edition of the text.
3. *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, 4, 8, 1-3.
4. *Ibid.*, 1, 10, 1.
5. *Ibid.*, 1, 11, 1.
6. *Ibid.*, 1, 12, 1.
7. *Ibid.*, 1, 3, 2.
8. *Ibid.*, 1, 1, 1; 1, 11, 6; 1, 2, 2.
9. *Ibid.*, 1, 2, 3.
10. *Ibid.*, 3, 7, 3. "Through *Sāma* Prajāpati, gods and *ṛṣi*-s attained immortality"
11. *Ibid.*, 4, 7, 1. *Yajña* is here identified with *puruṣa*; *puruṣa* with *udgītha*. The singing of *udgītha* loosens all the knots with which death binds the *Yajamāna*.
12. *Ibid.*, 1, 14, 1.
13. *Ibid.*, 1, 4, 1.
14. *Ibid.*, 3, 6, 1 to 3, 7, 1.



#### The Rodin Exhibition

Tata Theatre, March 19—April 21, 1983

Pilloo R. Pochkhanawala

[The Rodin Exhibition in New Delhi and Bombay offered Indian art lovers a unique opportunity to view the works of a great master. It was made possible because of the keen interest of the French Government, specially President Mitterand himself, in strengthening relations between France and India. The Exhibition was presented in Delhi from November 1982 to January 1983.

In Bombay, the Rodin Exhibition was inaugurated at the Tata Theatre on the 19th of March by Mr. H. K. L. Bhagat, Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting. Mr. J. J. Bhabha, Vice-Chairman of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, speaking on the occasion, said that this "magnificent exhibition bridged the gap between classical and modern art". Among those present at the inauguration were M. Michel Posselle, Consul-General for France, M. Gerard Delaforge of the BANQUE INDOSUEZ, which so generously underwrote the exhibition costs, and Mr. J. R. D. Tata, Chairman of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, whose enthusiasm for the project helped to bring the exhibition here.

When the exhibition closed on the 21st of April, more than 50,000 visitors, from all walks of life, had seen the 99 pieces of sculpture so tastefully displayed inside and around the Tata Theatre by M. Guy de la Chevalerie, Press and Information Officer of the Consulate of France (in Bombay) and Artistic Adviser to the Exhibition. The catalogue, amply illustrated, with notes, information on each of the items, commentaries on Rodin's themes and extracts of his views, served as a useful aid to the visitor. — Editor]

**"I am the bridge that unites both  
banks — the past and the present."  
— Rodin**

The mantle of Donatello fell on Michaelangelo and was passed on to Rodin. So it was absolutely natural that the artists and the public of Bombay awaited the Rodin Exhibition with a heightened sense of expectancy. The superb quality of the works exhibited transformed the foyer, the staircase, the parapet... in fact, the entire setting of the Tata Theatre into an art gallery, a museum.

The exhibition was indeed an important event, a major happening and we share the hope expressed by Mr. J. J. Bhabha that "this will be a beginning of many more showings of this calibre in the city."

#### Monuments

In a sense, Rodin is the last of the classicists. His works, 'The Man with the Broken Nose', 'The Thinker', 'Suzon', 'The Shadow', link him with the classical period in western sculpture. But with 'The Last Study for Balzac', which captures the simplicity of an upright altar-stone, Rodin heralds the revolution in twentieth century sculpture. The single figure stands at the summit of Rodin's career. We have to recall that this work, which paved the way for new possibilities in sculpture, created a furore when it was shown. How could this bulky mass, wrapped in a shapeless robe, be Balzac, the great man of letters? The critics could not break out of their conventional mould. They failed to recognise the quality of this work—its sheer energy, the sweep of the ascending planes and the magnificent head with its piercing farsightedness.

In 1884, Rodin was commissioned to create a monument for the town of Calais and to commemorate, in particular, the glory of Eustache de Saint-Pierre, its leading citizen. He had headed a group of six burghers ready to offer themselves as hostages to King Edward III of England (in 1346) in exchange for the safety of the inhabitants of Calais already starved and ruined by a year-long siege and famine. Instead of focussing on one heroic figure, Rodin, in 'The Burghers of Calais', chose to concentrate on the idea of collective sacrifice by grouping (on one level) six figures linked to each other like a 'rosary of suffering', by the movements of their bodies and the rope tied round their necks. In the figure of Pierre de Wissant, the upraised left arm, while it embodies pathos also links compositionally the three figures in front with those in the rear so that all six become a single group sharing one predominant emotion.



*The Burghers of Calais*

"Rodin made successive sketches of all the faces of his works, going constantly round them so as to obtain a series of views connected in a ring... He desired that a statue should stand free and should bear looking at from any point; moreover, it should remain in relation with the light and with the surrounding atmosphere."

From *Rodin on Art* (1905)  
by Camille Mauclair

#### Heads

"Each face contains all the mystery of the human, conceals all that man is under its succession of masks..." (Fredrick Frank: *The Zen of Seeing*).





*The Monumental Head of Balzac*

The monumental head of Balzac was one of the most outstanding pieces in the exhibition. The finely-chiselled planes of the nose and lips, the sweeping brow encircled by hair reminiscent of a lion's mane. The hollow eyes, peering into vast horizons of imagination and perception. In this portrait one sees the real thinker.

The portrait of Jean d'Aire, one of the burghers of Calais, is a poetic rendering of despair. The head of Eustache de Saint-Pierre, the principal burgher of Calais, suffers from no false heroics. The bearded and aged head, with its sunken cheek bones, ravaged by time and sorrow, reflects his tragic predicament. Gazing at the head of Pierre de Wissant, one can almost hear his cry of pain.



*Pierre de Wissant, Colossal Head*

Apart from his large portraits for monuments, Rodin's smaller heads also reflect a deep human understanding. 'The Mourner' is a study in suppressed grief, while 'Madame de Morla Vicuna', with her frozen aloofness, in cold marble. 'Suzon' is a charming portrait from Rodin's cameo days.

"Sometimes it is unbearable, almost too excruciating, impossible to draw someone you know very well, you love... You have seen through this special mask... have seen all too clearly into the riddle of that face... You see its vulnerability revealed." (Fredrick Frank: *The Zen of Seeing*).

'Mignon' and 'Bellona' are portraits of Rose Beuret, Rodin's model and life-long companion. In both these works, he captures her youth, her passion and possessiveness. The 'Mask of Madame Rodin', done fourteen years later, reveals the passage of time. The lips slightly parted in pain, the downcast eyes, the severe coiffure and the taut muscles of the face all suggest a sense of serenity and resignation.



Victor Hugo

#### Eyes

Rodin handles the human eye in several different ways.

In 'Bernard Shaw', the eyelids and eyeballs are on the same plane; the pupils of the eyes are barely suggested. Even so, the look is alive and active. In 'Victor Hugo', the hollow pupils, gazing sideways, give individuality to the face. In 'Mignon', the lower eyelids caress the eyeball, stressing the beauty and fragility of this young face.



Right Hand of one of the Burghers of Calais

#### Hands

Normally, one tends to think of the face as the only mirror of the soul, and its mobile features are often regarded as the expression of man's inner life. But, in reality, there is not a single muscle of the body which does not reveal feeling. Rodin's treatment of hands is eloquent enough to bear this out.

In 'The Kiss', the hand of the lover gently and hesitantly caresses his partner's hip and emphasises a mood of tenderness rather than passion. Though the moment of action is fixed, the continuous movement of the limbs suggests, to use Rodin's own words, "an illusion of actual motion."

The raised left arm, with its questioning hand, stresses the desperation of Pierre de Wissant and the five other burghers.

Rodin treats the hands with great reverence in 'The Cathedral'. The fingers of these two uplifted *right* hands meet in a spire and the palms enclose the vaulted space of a Gothic cathedral.



*The Cathedral*

### *The Human Figure*

Rodin executed the human figure as though it was a well-tuned instrument. 'The Walking Man' strides with confidence, though armless and headless. The action of walking is important and Rodin sought to eliminate any element that might draw attention away from this central idea.



*Iris, Messenger of the Gods*

Like the sun's rays on a turbulent sea, the rugged surfaces of Rodin's large, naked bodies ripple with light. "Instead of visualizing the different parts of the body as more or less plane surfaces, I imagined them to be projections of internal volumes . . . Thus the truth of my figures: instead of being superficial, they seem to grow from inside out, just as life itself" (Rodin).

Rodin's knowledge of human anatomy was phenomenal. Yet, this same knowledge was also his weakness. Some of his works are visual conquests rather than a spiritual experience and 'Meditation' is one of them. Again, 'The Idylle of Ixelles' seems to give the public what it wants—its familiar cherubs. 'Benediction', 'Daphnis and Lycinion', 'Eternal Spring' all suffer from sentimentality and an element of posturizing.

'Iris, Messenger of the Gods' is precariously balanced on his left foot, with the right thrown in a vertical kick. The right arm firmly grips the raised foot by the ankle, while the left arm is slashed off above the elbow and the head thrust back in total abandon. The movement captures the very spirit of speed, and is the forerunner of the series of dance movements executed years later.

By contrast, 'Mercury', with his horizontally outstretched hands and grounded feet, only conveys the gesture but not the spirit of speed.

#### *Eroticism*

In his works 'Women Damned', 'Fleeting Love', 'I am Beautiful', Rodin brought back eroticism into European sculpture after a span of centuries.



*I am Beautiful*

The crouched posture of the woman in total surrender to the dictates of passion ('I am Beautiful') was a very bold statement for his time and particularly so, because the European sculptors had for years created the posture of love without its passion.

#### *Dance Movements*

"Those extended leg muscles hold nothing if not speed . . . The closed thighs, so close together, a double caress, and jealously guarding the tenebrous mystery; an exquisite play of shade, accentuated by the light of the thighs."

Rodin's perceptive comment on the figure of the Nataraja.

Diaghilev's Ballet and Isadora Duncan had stormed into and captivated both Paris and Rodin.



*Dance Movement H*



*Pas de Deux B*





*Last Study for Balzac*

In these vigorous sculptures, conventional anatomy is swept away and the fierceness and freedom of the dance is stressed through distortion and exaggeration.

In 'Dance Movement 'H', the head has been sacrificed as it would have disturbed the movement of the arms. In 'Dance Movement F & G', the outward kick of the leg, the flow of the arms express sheer joy. In 'Pas de Deux B', the intertwined arms of the dancers stress their togetherness most impressively.

Along with his 'Balzac', this group of dancers has had an immense influence on contemporary sculpture.

Here one notices Rodin's unremitting devotion to nuance. His search for 'form' led to insights for which Maillol, Moore and many other sculptors acknowledged indebtedness to him.

Thus Rodin "opened a vast window in the pale house of modern statuary and made of sculpture, which had been a timid, compromised art, one that was audacious and full of hope." (Artist Pierre Roche).

The Austrian poet, Rainier Maria Rilke, one-time secretary to Rodin, aptly defines Rodin's great artistic achievement—"From the first hesitant step of the man who awakes to nature to the grand, provocative stride of Balzac, Rodin has inscribed in his work the complete evolution of human consciousness."

## The Maldhari Touch to Kutchi Performing Arts

(The Kutch Maldhari Lok-kala Mahotsava, Bhuj, February 22-27, 1983)

Mohan Nadkarni

A vast tract of land, exposed since time immemorial to the vagaries of the elements—that is Kutch, a region bound by the Gulf of Kutch on the south, the Arabian Sea on the west and separated from the mainland by the 8,000 square miles of the Rann of Kutch on the north and the east.

Geographically speaking, the Kutch territory, often mentioned as Ahir Desha in ancient literature, is one of the most segregated areas of the State of Gujarat as it is constituted today. With an annual rainfall of only 400 millimetres, the territory is arid. The climate, though, is conducive to cultivation of grass to feed cattle.

The history of Kutch is traced to the Harappan period of the Indus Valley Civilization. On the basis of available data, it would appear that Kutch had a riverine culture since the Indus once flowed through the region. The Harappans, it would seem, had found this region suitable for the development of agriculture and animal husbandry.

Through the centuries, however, Kutch gradually became a land of immigrants, who came from Sind, Rajasthan and Kathiawad (Saurashtra). It is now inhabited by several nomadic tribes and communities such as Ahirs, Rabaris, Bharwads, Langas, Kolis, Charans and Kheduts.

It is also a region where a large number of Hindus and Muslims, known as Maldharis, live in complete harmony. So much so, that there has not been a single instance of communal rioting anywhere in Kutch. What is more, the Hindus and the Muslims even share a common genealogy.

The term *Maldhari* has an inseparable association with Kutch. It has an interesting etymology. *Mal* connotes wealth, while *Dhari* means its owner. Cattle, camels, sheep and goats are regarded as wealth by the community. But mere ownership of animals does not make for a true Maldhari who showers on them the same affection that he would on members of his own family. If, for example, a cow or a buffalo dies during occasions of rejoicing (like a wedding), the celebration will be cut short to observe mourning. A Maldhari would claim to recognise even the footmarks of every animal in his herd. He can name his animal, it is said, by the taste of its milk or the particular smell associated with it.

Some Maldharis have subsisted entirely on camel's milk. They are said to have never consumed cereals and pulses in their lifetime. The animals, too, are said to reciprocate the affection of their masters and it is believed that if strangers try to steal them, the cattle prefer to jump into the sea than be caught and waylaid by intruders!

This kind of social cohesion (between the Hindus and the Muslims of Kutch) is a phenomenon that is not to be witnessed anywhere else. The Muslim Maldharis do not eat beef, for they regard the cattle as their fellowbeings. The Muslim Langas play the *shahnai* and the *naubat* in all the Hindu temples. A Muslim musician shelters both Hindu and Muslim students in his home. If the Hindus migrate from a village, the Muslims take care of their Hindu shrine. Members of both communities also play *Raasa* together on festive occasions.

Kutchi culture, needless to say, is heterogeneous in character. As a spoken language (Kutchi does not have a script of its own), it has a variety of dialects, revealing, in varying degrees, a curious mixture of Gujarati, Sindhi, Persian and Arabic, depending on the regions which are contiguous to the different borders of Kutch.

Since the Gujarati script is the medium of writing for spoken Kutchi, most of its literary compositions are still handed down as oral traditions of songs, verses, legends, etc. There is rich and variegated colour in the proverbs and idioms, because they represent a legacy to which the Hindus and the Muslims have contributed in equal measure. Another notable feature of Kutchi tradition is that references to cattle and their products form a recurring motif in the names of places and in the spoken idiom.

The people of Kutch have for centuries remained somewhat at a distance from civilization. Water is their major problem as there are no rivers in the region. Famine is a regular occurrence and Nature has, on the whole, been unkind to this tract. Yet the Kutchis are a hardy people, endowed with a rare spirit of courage. They are, in fact, proud of their land and they seek to forget the daily grind of privation in their music and dance. Even in an inhospitable environment, they have managed to maintain their distinctive cultural traditions.

The six-day festival of folk and tribal music and dance, held at Bhuj, from February 22 to 27, 1983, was jointly sponsored by the Indian National Theatre's Research Centre for the Performing Folk Arts and Excel Industries Limited. The festival was a revelation because it unfolded before us the brilliant panorama of the performing arts of the region on a common platform. This Kutch Maldhari Lok-kala Mahotsava involved the participation of over 500 artistes drawn from the region and a few from neighbouring Saurashtra. Their presentations comprised songs, colourful dances, *bhajan*-s, performances on instruments, story-telling sessions and several other forms of entertainment.

The Mahotsava was a resounding success. The spacious *shamiana*, specially erected for the event, had 5,000 people witnessing the programme on the opening night. The attendance increased with each succeeding session, and on the final night more than 10,000 people, quite a large proportion of whom remained standing, watched the proceedings.

Spread over twenty hours, the Mahotsava fare included more than 60 presentations which afforded many significant vignettes of the Kutchi performing arts with their regional variations. Of these, as many as 25 were *Raasa* dance items; 21 featured vocal programmes; six were instrumental music recitals

and there were seven items of poetry recitations, *kirtana*-s in prose and verse and narration of stories.

To mark the inauguration, the proceedings appropriately began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by ninety-year-old Suleman Jumma, the veteran *naubat* player, who also then presented the opening item of the Mahotsava. He produced an exciting variety of percussion patterns, often of great subtlety and complexity, to accompany the *shahnai* notes of his son Kamarbhai. The tunes were devotional in character and based on a number of local melodies known as Mada, Karai, Kutchi Kafi and Basant, the last of which, incidentally, was strikingly similar to the Hindustani *raga* Bahar.

Since detailed comments on individual items cannot be included here, an attempt is made to draw attention to just the highlights of the Mahotsava.

In the category of vocal recitals, pride of place must go to the impassioned *Rasuda* songs that came from the sixty-year-old, yet ebullient, Dhanbai Kara. Accompanied by *dhol* and *manjira*, she used appropriate gestures and equally expressive *abhinaya* to cast a spell on the listeners. So profound was the impact of her three *lokgeet*-s on the audience that in response to an encore, she rounded off her recital with another melody based on Pahadi.

Madhawala and Poonjawala, two Bhil brothers, who gave two performances, were in their element in their first recital. The brief, breezy songs in Kutchi Kafi had their own appeal and charm. But they could not create the same impact during their second appearance. Ali Mohammad Alarkhia's Kutchi Kafi numbers were interesting and made more lively by their intervening verbal comments. Delightful *bhajan*-s were also offered by Narendrasinh Jadeja, Lakharam Ransi, Sangabhai, Bhasar Bhura and Party, and Asmat Ransi.

In the instrumental section, Gulam Musa's *Jodiya Pawa* recital will be long remembered. *Jodiya Pawa* is a double flute and the player is accompanied by a soloist who provides the drone. Percussion support is conspicuous by its absence, but the flutist renders his numbers in a manner marked by a sense of rhythm pleasant to the ear. The short melodies that emanated from this gaily-decorated instrument were quite bewitching. In some of the pieces, there was a strange combination of *raga*-s like Kafi, Zinzoti and Sarang. At times, one also sensed a Carnatic touch in many a sequence or phrase. In contrast, the double-flute item, heard at a later session from Hussein Bawla Mistry, proved to be dull and routine.

Musa Lal's playing of *Morchang*, a mouth instrument, was striking only for its novelty. The instrument has its counterpart in the Carnatic ensemble and is often employed during Bharata Natyam performances. Musa's percussion support came from a metal basin which was held upside down by the player to produce rhythmic effects.

Pleasing music also came from Sumarbhai Suleman's playing of *Sundri*, which is a variation of the popular *Shahnai*. It is much smaller in size and has a shrill and high tone. The artiste played tunes based on Mishra Khamaj, Pilu

and Bhimpalasi. Then there was an interlude which presented pure, simple music on an instrument known as *Morii*, which resembles the snake-charmer's *Pungi*. Jogji Velji, the artiste, played tunes which were based on Kafi, Jogiya and Bhairavi. Another instrument which compelled attention was *Dakla*, which can be described as a big-size *Daff*, familiar in Maharashtra. It is played in propitiation of Asapura Devi who is then believed to enter the body of one of her devotees. It is the rhythm of the instrument that is said to invoke the divine spirit. Narsi Mammu, who played the *Dakla*, also recited some verses which sounded like incantations.

Khodidan Payak's *Lokvarta* in Kutchi was a fine specimen of story-telling—eloquent, inspired and rhythmical. A similar item by Dulabhai Tarakia was far too brief. P. B. Gadhai's narration about the life and work of the leading local poet, Raghavji, elicited warm response from the audience, while Husseinbhai's story, based on the *Jasma Odan* theme, came to an abrupt end because of booing from the same audience.

Now, about the dance performances. Opinions will differ sharply on whether the overwhelming preponderance of the *Raasa* repertoire generated the kind of monotony and listlessness which, this writer feels, sometimes dogged the proceedings. Frankly, in point of structure, design and presentation, the dance section did not unfold much variety, though the thematic basis of each item may have been different. For instance, movements by *dandiya*-wielding participants, conjuring different formations were an integral part of the presentation. But they did give rise to moments of boredom largely because four to five such items were featured at each session and sometimes in a row.

Even so, mention must be made of the few performances which were interesting and exciting. One was *Talwar Raasa*, in which Hindu and Muslim artistes, from the original Rajput and Jat communities, participated. It depicted how in earlier times two opposing groups employed their swords to settle their feuds.

Then there was a group of eighteen boys, all between the ages of six and twelve, garbed in spectacular male and female costumes. They swept the audience off its feet by their attractive presentations. In another item, the dancers created swirling patterns as they sat and stood even while making their movements. In between, two dancers came forward from the wings with a proper camouflage which resembled a deer. A hunter was shown trying to catch the deer, while another tried to stop him. Thus a semblance of a folk drama was created against the background of the regular *Raasa* performances.

There was also a composite presentation in which male and female artistes from the Harijan community participated. Their movements in a variety of formations sought to depict the various phases of agricultural activities.

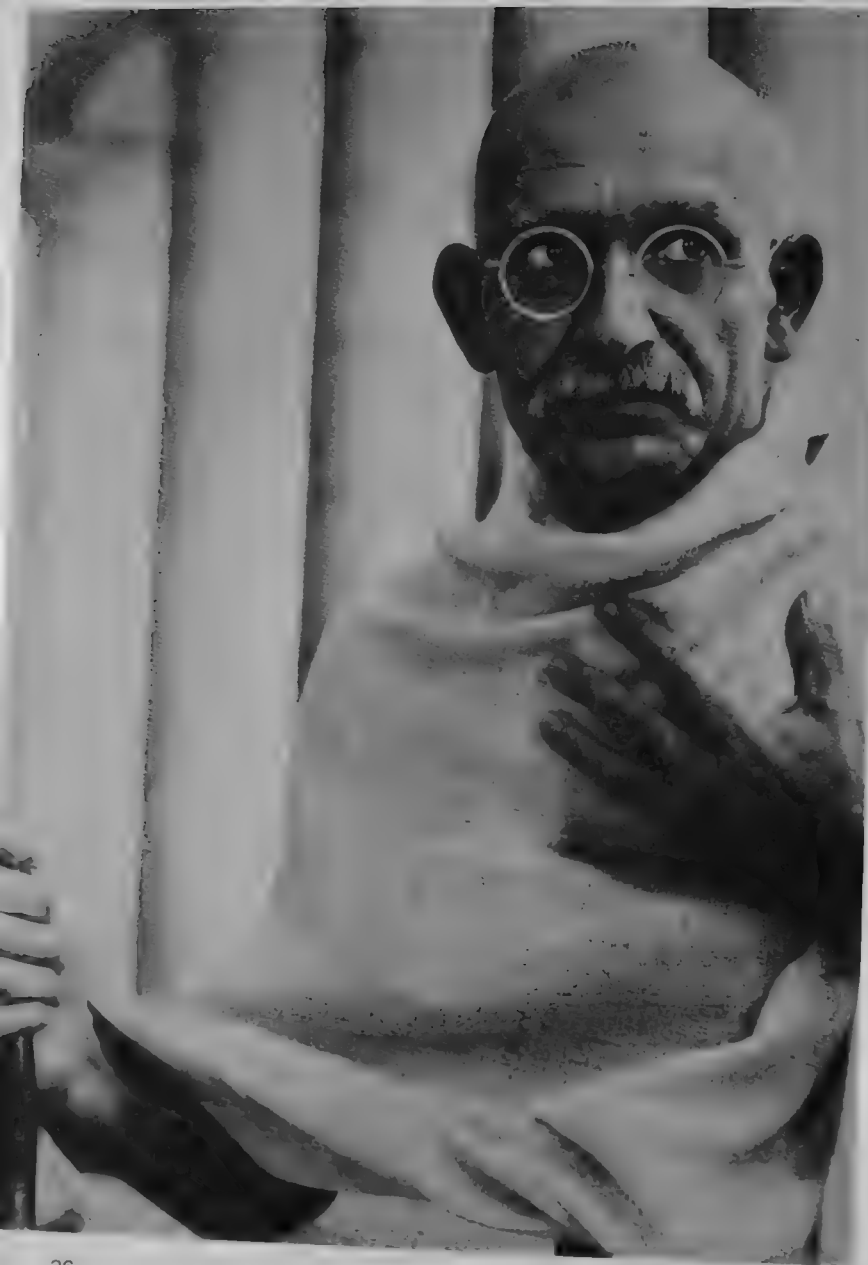
But the most impressive performance in this category was probably the one presented by 25 dancers from the Negro colony near Bhuj. With black scarves tied round their heads and accompanied by five main drummers, the artistes sang and danced, each one playing his own small drum. And as they

proceeded to move in a crescendo, they created a mood that had a trance-like effect on the spectators. The dance had a compulsive, hypnotic tempo.

A four-day seminar on the cultural traditions of Kutch was held as part of the Mahotsava. The discussions covered the folk culture of Kutch, the history and the origin of Maldharis and the oral traditions of the region.

Among the recommendations made at the seminar were the urgent need for starting research projects in the field of the history, literature and the performing arts of Kutch, the setting up of a welfare centre for the Maldharis, and a periodic organization of festivals of folk and tribal music and dance to ensure preservation and perpetuation of the Kutchi cultural heritage.

The scholars who made significant contributions were Ramsinhji Rathod, Shambhu Prasad Desai, Shambhudanji Gadhai, Nagjibhai Bhatti, Jyotindra Jain, Vijayalaxmi Kotak, Dilip Vaidya, Pratap Trivedi and Upendra Vora.



## GANDHI

Bikram Singh

Not since *Gone with the Wind*, said the reports, has any film got such a large haul of Oscars as Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*. The haul, made at the 55th presentation of the renowned Academy awards in Los Angeles, consisted of Best Picture, Best Director (Richard Attenborough), Best Actor (Ben Kingsley), Best Art Direction, Best Original Screenplay, Best Costume Design (incidentally, the first Oscar to go to an Indian—Bhanu Athaiya—who shared it with her fellow costume designer), Best Cinematography, Best Editing. That's a tally of eight awards out of eleven nominations. Earlier, *Gandhi* featured prominently in the British Academy awards, the annual 'bests' of the New York Film Critics Circle and elsewhere. No film in recent times has won honours on this scale. Add to this the fact that the film has been attracting large audiences in India and has been an exceptionally popular draw in London and other places abroad and the *Gandhi* mystique becomes complete.

When the film went into production about three years ago it was amidst a fierce dust-storm of criticism: Why should the Government of India favour it with massive financial backing? Weren't there enough talented filmmakers in India that the production of the first feature film on the Father of the Nation should be left to a foreigner? Wasn't it ridiculous to imagine that an unknown actor called Ben Kingsley—another foreigner—could ever successfully evoke the spirit and flesh of the Mahatma? And now, in the wake of the big sweep of the Oscars, there is a certain backlash ('It's not all that good'. 'In its anxiety to keep favourable focus on Gandhi, it does not mind throwing other things, including history, out of focus', and choice quotes from a relentlessly negative review by a widely known American critic who described the whole thing as an 'empty, schoolboy's hero worship').





Whatever the reservations and charges that his critics and even admirers might have against Sir Richard Attenborough's approach to the subject, nobody can accuse him of not knowing where he was headed. Soon after shooting of the film began in India, he told a Bombay journalist, "I am not doing a film on Indian independence or the history of India. I am telling the story of an extraordinary man. . . . You want to see a documentary, see Mr. Jhaveri's film which runs five-and-a-half hours. It is a marvellous documentary, but no cinema in the West will show it. I want to show my film in the West; they know nothing about Bapu. There is need to know him". And that was the position after he had been thinking and planning and negotiating about the film for some eighteen years during which time the story of the extraordinary man was transformed into at least three separate scripts, first by Gerald Hanley, next by Robert Bolt (which missed final selection, it seems, because of Bolt suffering a stroke), lastly by John Briley (which Attenborough, prophetically, regarded as a 'totally brilliant and original screenplay' anticipating the Academy's assessment). Since there is no question about the excellence of Kingsley's Gandhi, it is interesting to recall that among the names considered for the casting of Gandhi were Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins, Tom Courtenay, John Hurt, Albert Finney, Dustin Hoffman. Attenborough's imagination was stirred when he saw Kingsley in Peter Brook's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was obviously a difficult choice and Attenborough's judgement must be praised for making the right one.

Part of the phenomenal success of *Gandhi* can be understood by reference to the fact that a whole new generation, the post-independence generation of Indians, for whom Gandhi has so far been little more than a face in the photographs and a name in the history books, finds the legendary man suddenly coming alive in flesh and blood, a live man with a special way of walking, a special way of smiling and with a haunting kind of gleam in his eyes. A concrete image, invested with fascinating details, has no equal as an anchor for the imagination. The nearly hypnotic power of the image, jointly created by Attenborough and Kingsley, lies in its capacity to leave you with the feeling that Gandhi, undoubtedly quite different from this impersonation, *could* have been like him. The fact that the recreated Gandhi works even for those audiences who still carry memories, varying in degrees of sharpness, of the real Gandhi seems to be indicative of one thing above all: the film's bold gamble of going for the essence and coming up with a tentative essential Gandhi has paid off. The real-life Gandhi may have been a complex man, inscrutable in many ways, a domineering family head and husband, a stubborn politician, obliquely self-righteous as an aspirant for a higher spiritual life. But that was not the full measure of the man; he had certain outstanding qualities, or rather certain qualities in unusual abundance, which drove him to the centre of the history of his times, and it is obviously the Attenborough-Briley proposition that these were—courage and determination. Beginning from the moment that shows him resisting eviction from a first-class train seat to which he holds a proper ticket, scene after scene shows him in possession of an extraordinary amount of the quality of courage until there is no doubt left that, in this ordinary-looking man, the world has on its hands stuff that is made of reinforced steel. As to determination, it is evident in every gesture, every stride and every look of Ben Kingsley. Many a viewer might be tempted to quietly say to himself: so this was the *real* Gandhi that we missed behind the real-life Gandhi of the hurly-burly of politics, the Gandhi we knew from the daily newspapers and the occasional meetings that he came to address in our town.



To want to make a film about Gandhi is to be old-fashioned; to have as the purpose of such a film not *examination*, not *analysis* of the subject but misty-eyed exposition of the high points of a life already assumed to be extraordinary, is to be even more old-fashioned, or perhaps to indulge in an empty, schoolboy's hero-worship. It is, in any case, against the grain of the times to have a saintly person, and cheerfully and successfully saintly at that, as the hero of your story; such characters strain credibility and generate nothing but embarrassment. This sort of exercise goes against the new sensibility which insists, with a certain aggressiveness, that saintliness and all that do not work any more, that such concepts are highly suspect and whenever encountered must be promptly dismantled until they are shown up to be elaborate, misleading, covering some deep-seated rot.

But, maybe the hardened, hopeless, unblinking cynics are just getting out of step with the times. Maybe Attenborough was right about there being a need to *know* people like Gandhi, just know without questioning and analysing (primitive, unscientific?). The wide acceptance of *Gandhi* would indicate a widespread longing for a return to simpler times.

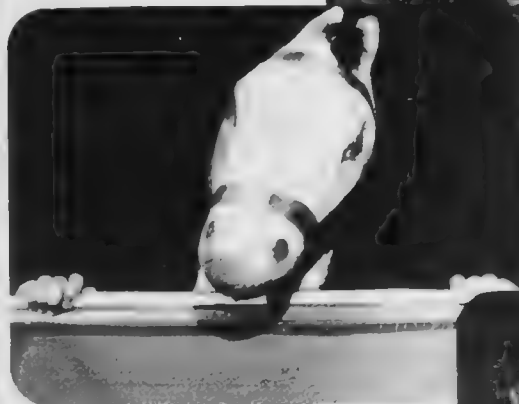
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*Pictures:*

*Ben Kingsley and Rohini Hattangadi in the roles of Gandhi and Kasturba.*

*Courtesy: MUSIC INDIA LTD.*

## HAYAVADANA



## HAYAVADANA

Kumud Mehta

*Hayavadana* had its premiere on May 20, 1983 at the Tata Theatre. Shri Vasantao Patil, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, was the Chief Guest. Sponsored by the National Centre for the Performing Arts and the Goa Hindu Association, the first five shows scheduled at the Tata Theatre received an enthusiastic response from theatre-lovers and connoisseurs. *Hayavadana* was written by Girish Karnad during his tenure as a Homi Bhabha Fellow, and designed by the same creative team (Vijaya Mehta and Bhaskar Chandavarkar) which had successfully produced *Shakuntala* during the inaugural week of the Tata Theatre.

Why did Vijaya Mehta and Bhaskar Chandavarkar, who had just recently concentrated their energies on a burning contemporary theme, the psyche of the *dalit* (Vijaya Mehta while directing *Purusha* and Bhaskar Chandavarkar in his film *Atyachara*) turn now to this play based on the *Vetalpanchavimshati*, the cycle of twenty-five tales related by a demon, from one of the oldest collection of stories in Sanskrit literature? It is not difficult to surmise the reasons for the choice. For *Hayavadana*, as conceived by Girish Karnad, focusses on a crucial aspect of any kind of modern self-enquiry. Wherein lies an individual's identity? In mental equipment, knowledge as embodied in Devadatta's personality? Or, in the sheer evidence of the world known to Kapil through the sensations of his body? Or, perhaps, in Padmini's subconscious yearning for a perfect partner embracing both these attributes? Besides, even as a modern seeks to understand the meaning of selfhood, does he not, with equal anguish, long to be unfragmented, integrated, whole? It is this philosophical undercurrent that runs through *The Transposed Heads*, Thomas Mann's renowned version of this story.

As this ancient tale unfolds, the playwright, the lyricist, the director, the music director, the actors and the spectators all seem, at some point or the other, asking and seeking answers to these questions.

But for all its thematic 'content', the tale had to have the stamp of *theatre*. It could have been conceived as an intense psychological drama (not unlike *Adhe Adhure*) with the woman desperately in search of an 'ideal' companion. Or, it could have been moulded in the strict format of a single, recognisably folk style. This tale and its dramatized version had touches of the bizarre, the humorous, the romantic and yet within it lay a philosophical kernel. So Vijaya Mehta and Bhaskar Chandavarkar chose to draw from several elements of folk theatre they had assimilated during their collaboration for similar projects in the course of the last few years.

These elements include fluid flow of narrative, scope for spontaneous, even improvised, speech and gesture, and mainly, of course, the sheer energy, bold outlines, the reinforcement to words offered by music, rhythmic movement, and percussion. And Vijaya Mehta exercised the choice to use a folk convention but only to the extent it strengthened the impact of a situation. For instance, she follows tradition in using a half curtain before revealing in full the form of Ganesha, or the figure of Devadatta, or the half-man Hayavadana or the



magic of Padmini's beauty. But would the curtain not become a hindrance for Kapil, the locksmith's son, who must enter unbridled and dauntless like the onrush of 'windy weather'?

In *Hayavadana*, we recognise the devices of folk theatre—not as fossils for preservation, but as imaginatively integrated elements designed to capture the attention of today's theatre-goer, and create a live theatre event. The Bhagavatha (here called Buwa) links the episodes in speech or songs; he is at times a commentator and occasionally a sympathetic participant in the action. While his diction is chaste, and Devadatta's is 'correct' in line with his scholarly inclinations, the villagers betray, through their dialect, a typically rural curiosity (insatiable but not unfriendly), about the strange story of Hayavadana. Kapil's words bear the rough imprint of his rugged body. The jingling couplets of the puppets have a touch of baby-talk, bordering on the comic. These spoken words are forged for Marathi audiences who can instinctively identify the speech with the traits of a character. The costumes, too, are woven out of a similar indigenous fabric: neutral and drab for the villagers, of a black and coarse texture for the sturdy Kapil. There is the traditional Brahmin's attire for Devadatta and an auspiciously-coloured green sari and yellow *choli* of ordinary cotton for Padmini. The presentation does not seek to dazzle through gloss or glitter. Its visual beauty stems more from gait, grace or even awkwardness of movement and the composition and flow of every single sequence to match the mood of that moment.

The palanquin that sets the play in motion is part of the ritual of a village procession, where the deity is carried and worshipped at various points on important occasions. It marks the beginning of an enactment. All the props are displayed at the start, the masks of the slashed heads, the puppets, the dolls. Thus, the audience knows right at the start that it is a play based on an ancient tale, that disbelief will have to be suspended and what meaning they will absorb from it will be communicated through the enactment. This may well be called Brechtian 'alienation' but we recognise it as integral to our folk tradition—where the narrator relates, warns, comments, where the story may be known but the enactment itself will demand alert participation.

The play is made of the stuff of legend and myth. The celebration of a marriage, the ritual of the beheading, the transposition of the heads, the final fight to death, a rite designed to reveal the reality of a dilemma which since it cannot be solved has, once and for all, to be ended. (Whose is the breast that is pierced? Whose the head that is slashed?) What course then is left for Padmini (who loved both equally) except the act of entering the pyre which will consume her body, uniting it with those of the men she loved? To be a *Sati* is her own firm resolve, not foisted on her by a cruel social order. In the words of Thomas Mann, "For where the single essence has fallen into such conflict, it were best it melt in the flame of life as an offering of butter in the sacrificial fire." Here is the logical end of the passions she unleashed. Is Padmini perhaps a frailer, human version of the Kali who answered her prayer and restored the lives of the men? An annihilator, in one sense? But also a procreator, for had not the sleep-soaked Kali prevented Padmini from killing herself to save the seed which Padmini carried in her womb? Now the act

of procreation is over. The child is handed over to be reared initially by the Bhils among whom Kapil had lived and then sent to Devadatta's family to carry on its scholarly inheritance. The rite of *Sati* is described in song, without any aura of glorification; and even as those few seconds, which suggest the rising red flames enveloping her body and those of the slain men, come to an end, the frame-story takes over, with the entry of Hayavadana.

The half-horse half-man, who had sought to be a 'complete' man, is now a 'complete' horse, still cursed by human speech. The frame-story concept is integral to India's traditional mode of narrative and, in this particular case, expresses an essential component of our world-view. Humans do not hold a monopoly over 'feelings' or 'yearnings'. All sentient beings share them and the frame-story complements the dilemma of the three humans, gives it the universal touch of the ever-recurring cycle of life. Here, embodied in Padmini's son, silent, serious, clutching at the dolls as he walks towards Hayavadana. The narrator gently draws him out, through the lullaby that Padmini used to sing for him. Innocent laughter restores to the boy his childhood. Hayavadana, now complete, neighing as he would like to, brings at least one tale of the *Vetalapanchavimshati* to its close, but it was just one of the many dilemmas that the *vetala* had posed to King Vikrama. Vikrama had decreed that the mind was the seat of a man's personality. But the simple answer did not solve the problem. How could it, for in the words of one of the hymns of the *Rigveda* the mystery of the universe and the stirrings of the mind are unfathomable.

This complex tale unfolded itself smoothly but with a precision achieved through an arduous schedule of rehearsals. Nobody was a 'star' but every single artiste enacted his or her role with the exactitude demanded by Vijaya's directorial interpretation: Devadatta, romantic and moody in turns; Kapil, simple, direct, but proud and fiery in defeat and evoking sympathy. Naturally, for he is the loser, a loner, dispossessed. And Padmini, graceful, flirtatious, perplexed by the anguish she had caused. The duo of comics doubling as actors, villagers, puppet-dolls, establishing immediate rapport with the spectators. Kali, at once sleepy and yet alert, as petty as a human in her envy of Rudra but, at the same time, the all-knowing one, vibrant and awesome like any village deity. The pathetic Hayavadana, Padmini's little boy (with an inborn stage presence). It was a triumph of ensemble work, with nobody upstaging the other.

Bhaskar Chandavarkar's musical score enhanced the vibrancy of the production and the poignant lyrics of the late C. T. Khanolkar (also a Homi Bhabha Fellow) and the eminent Marathi poetess Shanta Shelke. In composing the music for *Hayavadana*, he sought inspiration from folk melodies but did not transplant them mechanically into a contemporary theatre event. The tunes and rhythms are here revitalised, and transformed (as they should be and always have been) through the very freedom latent in their spirit. A freedom which has kept them alive and their appeal abiding. In tune with the theme of the play, the music echoes the idea of incompleteness, even severance. For instance, the invocation fulfils for a moment the expectations of the audience since its *mukhada* bears the stamp of the evening *raga* Nanda but almost immediately the *antara* takes a different, a vigorous turn in the *tamasha-gan* style. The force of the *dhangari* (herdsman) tune as Kapila axes a tree is interrupted when he says, "And now



this mortal agony." The wounds inflicted on the tree are no different from the hurt afflicting him.

Sometimes the music reinforces the meaning of a scene. Solemn is the chant when Devadatta takes his pledge. Exuberant when the two young men roam hand-in-hand, bound in ties of friendship. It exudes a sense of foreboding the moment Kapil touches Padmini's feet. The erotic strains of the *lavani* form give verbal and aural shape to Padmini's fascination for Kapil's irresistible body. The perplexity when the heads are transposed is expressed in the question-answer rhythms so typical of folk styles.

But there are occasions when the music works at a different level, in a direction contrary to the action. The song accompanying Padmini's abandon as she introduces her child to the magic of the forest has a touch of yearning, the suggestion of a resolute intention that prompted the journey. When Padmini is waiting for Kapil to accept her, and he is almost ready, the near-devotional strain of the melody is offset by a fast rhythmic pace which accentuates an attraction difficult to control.

Listening to the melodies towards the close of the play, one was reminded of the old Marathi musicals, moving from the late evening *raga*-s to the plaintive notes of the Kalingda-Jogia *raga*-s of dawn which used to bring a performance to an end. But here again the frame-story took over. The 'ordinary' passage of time from night to day, from childhood, manhood to old age was replaced, in the true folk spirit, by a celebration of the Cycle of Life in the song of the gallant rider who wafted merrily through the thrusts of Time.

The music is thus as much a part of the play as the actors' interpretation of their roles. The musicians move freely from the area of the 'orchestra' to the actors' arena and this physical fluidity runs parallel to the flexibility of the music. The stringed instruments (*dotara* and *ektara*), are used very sparingly to denote Kapil's desolate spirit. Six kinds of percussion instruments (*duff*, *halgi*, *pakhawaj*, *dhholki*, *samel*, and *ghumat*), a large metal bell and cymbals of various sizes, aided by the tuneful rendering of the lyrics by the narrator (Sharad Jambhekar) provide the tonal colour needed to express the import of a scene or a character's feelings.

Thus Vijaya Mehta and Bhaskar Chandavarkar together brought all the verve of a folk enactment to a play staged in the elegant setting of the Tata Theatre. The pillar at the centre (which so many directors have described as a bane) was turned to advantage. It became Padmini's resort when she mused over the inner stirrings of her heart. The semi-circular edge of the stage area was used as a seat where the puppets could confide their feelings to the spectators. It was turned into a narrow path where Padmini, walking precariously, could playfully ridicule Devadatta's inability to control the direction of a cart. Every action, every step was carefully orchestrated but it held the spectator transfixed in his seat at the very thought of the risk if the artiste were but to miss her footing! It was something Peter Brook had spoken of in his workshop at Bhopal: the spectator will take in the words even as he watches with bated breath the artiste's physical daring.

The polished wood of the walls and flooring added a glow to the performance. All the doors (usually hermetically sealed) were open but the projection of the voices was so clear that not a line uttered by the actors was missed. (A structural engineer had once woefully remarked, "Damn it! The acoustics are not just excellent, but perfect. You can hear the breathing of the man next to you.") The acoustics did give the aural dimension so essential to convey the timbre of every artiste's voice, the quality of the music and the beat of the percussion.

The lighting helped to heighten the visual effects. In the Tata Theatre, almost all the spectators watch the happenings on the stage from a higher level. The area of the lighted space is seen clearly demarcated—the shaft of light, as each of the three main characters nears the Kali Temple, suddenly appears to be an entrance door. Padmini, suffused in a red glow, leaning against the pillar, communicates a physical ardour to match her inner needs so vividly communicated by the lyrics and the melody . . . And so on. What were described as hindrances in the effective staging of plays at the Tata Theatre were transformed by Vijaya Mehta's inventive directorial talent into positive advantages.

In the foyer, in the lobby, backstage, the end of every performance was marked by a mood of exhilaration which invariably indicates that everyone has participated in a wonderful theatre event.

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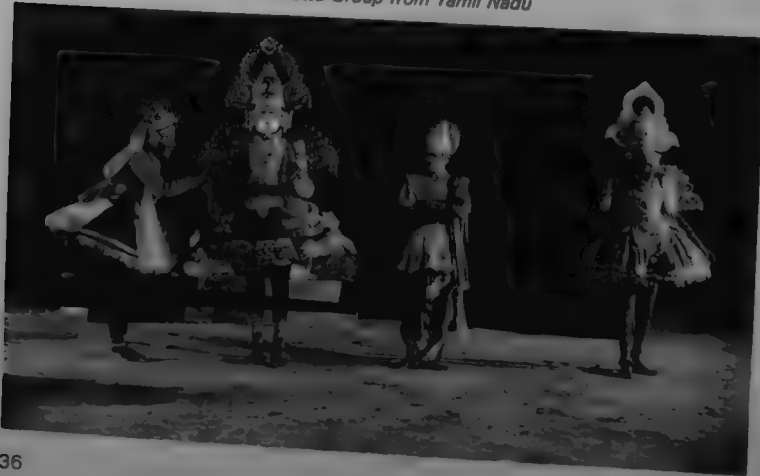
## News and Notes

*Nukkad Rang Mela, Bhopal, February 19-28, 1983*

"*Raajaa kaa baajaa bajaah*"—A gentle half light slowly flows across the lake, the circle widens and the bodies whirl into corners. Then they freeze—as the drums beat and the notes of the flute announce the start of the Nukkad Rang Mela in Bharat Bhavan.

Street Theatre has always been a live tradition in India: *Path Natak*, *Veedinatak*, *Terukuttu* have been performed by versatile actors who successfully incorporated the elements of ritual, song and dance to weave colourful spectacles, embodying people's cherished beliefs. Because of the immediacy of the content and the warm and spontaneous response that it generates, the Street Theatre form is ideal for a dynamic relationship between actors and spectators. Recognising this potential, the Madhya Pradesh Rang Mandal, in association with the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, organised a ten-day Festival of Street Theatre and offered several groups an opportunity to appear on a common platform. In a sense, it was the coming together of groups involved in theatre work mirroring their social and political conscience and reaching out for some contact with ordinary mortals. Moving away from internal and personal art, Street Theatre sought to widen its base by combining techniques, sharpened by observation, and skills forged by the sheer necessity to communicate something vital in our lives. And the spirit of experiment grew as different issues and arguments surfaced: political versus radical theatre, instinctive reactions versus technical accomplishment; author versus improvisation; author versus director; cliché versus slogan.

*Terukuttu Group from Tamil Nadu*



*Street Theatre Group from Puttur*

The basic premise was: *Why am I doing what I am doing?* The answers, if not conclusions, were found in the work.

A Dehra Dun group brought *Raajaa kaa baajaa bajaah*, a piece they have staged in Garhwal and the Kumaon Hills. Twenty thousand villagers watched this collective piece about the crisis in education.

Student : *I walk so far to college. Why is there no one to teach me? I come from such a long distance.*

Lecturer : *Why are you grumbling? If your house is so far away, try and find a house close to the college! Get out!!*

The student, now a graduate, is finally granted an interview for a job. Forty thousand applications have been received. Finally it is the *chairman kay behnoi ka chacha ka saalaa* who gets the job. "Get out!", the authorities shriek. "Yes, but where?" They kick the applicant till he is numbed into silence to the lift of *Saare jahan se achchhaa, Hindustan hamaraa*.

"Thousands of rivers flow towards the ocean of struggle", says the Dalit poet Siddaligaiah. *Samudaya*, a socio-cultural movement, was initiated in Bangalore in 1974. Basing itself on the slogan "Mass Education", *Samudaya* now has 18 units with a membership of 2,500 in cities and district headquarters all over Karnataka. It sought contact with the people, at grass-roots level. It wanted to learn, experience, evaluate the scene, and use theatre as an instrument of education. It attacked feudal and semi-feudal values, the evils of caste, communalism, superstitions and exploitation. Several groups covered their specific areas starting at 6 a.m. Travelling on bicycles, they would visit four to six villages a day. Out of their repertoire, I saw two pieces in Bhopal. Their exploration of

body language and sound patterns was haunting. The street calls, whistles, groans, drum beats, bells, masks, cymbals and flute were magical. Using linear and circular patterns, the work is clean, concise; strong voices, lithe and long bodies are used in song and dance rhythms. The *Samudaya* group's achievement belies the claims of all our training camps and acting schools. For them, the process of learning how to act is life.

Living Theatre's writer-director, Prabir Guha, is a clerk in a pharmaceutical firm in the 24-Parganas of West Bengal. His tiny troupe of actors find menial jobs or work as electricians, plumbers, carpenters. Amateur in status, professional in style, this brilliant posse of actors used *Jatra*, *Chhau* and *Baul* styles for their political statements. Clearly inspired by Poland's Grotowski, the physical impact of body and voice control places their style diametrically opposite to the more earthy folk forms. As they huddle, whisper, dance in slow motion, secretly creating terror in the audience, they scream for a violent revolution. Strong imagery, pictorial flashes of greed, struggle, drought, famine, sweat and toil, clamour consistently for a cathartic ending.

Topical and appealing was *Ehsas* by a small women's group. Their work grew out of a need to talk, reach out to other women. In 1979, during the Holi festival, they were assaulted with hockey sticks and chains in St. Stephen's College, New Delhi. Protests to the authorities led nowhere. But this play did. Since then, they've staged it in several colleges and before many women's groups... I saw them perform in Bidi Mazdoor Basti in Bhopal, where women in *burkha* sat watching the performance in a curious silence. At the end of each scene, the women would clap and talk excitedly, lifting their veils in defiance. *Ehsas*, a collective piece, was designed and the songs composed during college hours, in the afternoons. There is virtually no director, and this fact is clearly evident in the improvised quality of their work. The simple, infectious theme reflects the feelings of women about men, old women, careers, authority. In the final analysis, it is the *pita/bhai/pati/beta* regime they are fighting. The group used a couple of male actors. Interestingly, I found them to be even fiercer feminists than the women.

The traditional puppet form was introduced into the festival rather briefly by the Kanetkars, a husband-and-wife team, operating from Kalyan, in the Thane District of Maharashtra. A fair variety of puppets are used; glove, string, giant figures as in processions, and, of course, the latest fad, Paper Bag Puppetry. This team works through a novel free-form idea. Apart from performing set pieces in villages, they move into the cultural mainstream, and, through personal contact, evolve a small play, based on the ideas and the needs of that particular village, using local colour, local actors in a creative dialogue of message and media.

"Mainath aur majdoori sab say phaley dharam". This slogan formed the base of an earthy tale-of-the-soil from *Sankalpa*, Triveni, Rajasthan. The piece, *Salah*, with its rich tradition of folklore, hums with politically-based street theatre, using music and dance, woven into a slogan-oriented, free-form happening. "Open the doors and let new thoughts come in", chanted the actors to the accompaniment of a flute and a drum, as they whirled like dervishes in and around the audience. The players, highly literate, project themselves into a rural setting. They till the ground, sow the seed, water the soil, reap the fruits. We see a little story unfold.

The tale of two brothers. Religious friction seeps into the village. The Pandit and the Kazi intervene. More friction. The audience is invited to participate, offer solutions. The chant slowly rises, "The Pandit and the Kazi are dividers of the people" and again "Before we die, let us remove the darkness of illiteracy".

There were scores of troupes. There was the Sutradhar Theatre Institute from Maharashtra, headed by Ratnakar Matkari, bringing an improvised folk-tale in the *Tamasha* form; the ebullient Gurusharan Singh from the Amritsar Drama Group, with his troupe of carpenters, signboard painters, accountants, all highly professional comedians. The group from Bihar shocked us into a paralysing silence. Their hour-long, well-rehearsed, controlled work, was filled with unmitigated violence. Blinding. Stabbing. Beating. Pulverizing. Tortures of every conceivable description. Their brute force left nothing to the imagination. Why should it? Art is life, they claim.

The eighties are going to be full of art committed to social change. The options offered are simple. In the Radical Theatre, you can afford to grumble. In the Political Theatre, you must take action. The Nukkad Rang Mela was a pointer in more ways than one...

—PEARL PADAMSEE

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*Bhavai Festival of Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad, March 4-6, 1983*

The ancient art of *Bhavai*, the traditional *natya* form of Gujarat, was revived recently at a *Bhavai* festival organised by the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts in Ahmedabad, from March 4-6, 1983. The festival was actually the culmination of a project, funded by a grant from the Government of Gujarat (through the Sangeet Nritya Natya Akademi), and intended for an exploration of the possibilities and dimensions of the *Bhavai* art form.

*Bhavai* is the common heritage of North Gujarat, Saurashtra and some of the western regions of Rajasthan and Malwa, which, at some stages in history, were culturally, socially and even politically one. In North Gujarat, *Bhavai* was a popular form of entertainment and education right from the time of Asaita Thakar (fourteenth century). He was a *kathakar*, who invested *Bhavai* with a local colour by introducing certain regional elements of music, theme-motifs, dance and other conventions. Asaita is said to have written over 360 *vesha*-s, or playlets, each with a purpose—social, moral or religious—and built around the localised form. Each *vesha* has, apart from the plot, elements of music, dance, recitation, narrative, acrobatics, magic etc. A combination of all these elements lends a special charm to a *Bhavai* performance.



Vadilal Nayak as Jhandakan and Chimanlal Nayak as Tejan in Jhanda-Jhulan

Asaita Thakar's followers came to be known as *tragala-s* (those who have three houses). Professionally, they are called *bhavaia-s* or *nayak-s*.

With the inroads of western culture in the early part of the century, *Bhavai*, like other traditional drama forms all over the country, began to lose its lustre. The desire to stem the further decline of *Bhavai* prompted the State Government to plan a school of *Bhavai* at Visnagar, the birth-place of the great *tragala* actor, Jayashankar 'Sundari'.

The first task of the present project, however, was to create a cadre of teachers who could impart training in the different aspects of this form. Ten students, six boys and four girls, were selected for the purpose and the traditional *Bhavai* artistes, Chimanlal Nayak, Jayshankar Nayak, Shankarlal, Madhavlal and Babulal Nayak, were entrusted with the task of teaching them. Gradually, the senior artistes became aware of the problems involved in the kind of day-to-day teaching to which they were not accustomed. During this period, the students were taught two *vesha-s* under the guidance of Kailash Pandya and Damini Mehta.

Also, certain *vesha-s* were video-taped in their edited form with a view to preserving them. Certain *Bhavai* costumes, based on the old ones, were made for the same purpose. As part of the project, an illustrated monograph, written by Goverdhan Panchal, on the origin of *Bhavai*, its costumes, make-up and properties, entitled *Bhavai and its Typical Aharya*, is also being published.

On the first day of the festival, the students performed the *vesha-s* of Juthan and Ishaklal. The students were responsible for their own make-up, sang their own songs, played the instruments and danced and performed with total abandon. Their presentation was well-received by the audience.

The next day, the *tragala-s* performed several *vesha-s*. Two of these *vesha-s* (*Kan-gopi* and *Purabio*), were revived by them on the spot as they had not been performed for a long time. In *Kan-gopi*, the veteran Jayshankar Nayak (of Maktupar), playing the role of Govalio, evoked hearty laughter as he frisked about among the *gopi-s*. At the age of seventy-five he was enacting the part of a vigorous youth. Kan was played by Shankarlal, a versatile artiste. The winner of both the Central and State Akademi Awards for Folk Art, Chimanlal Nayak (of Brahmanwada village), playing Tejan, and Vadilal Nayak (of Kahoda) playing Jhandakan in the *vesha* of *Jhanda-Jhulan* gave an inspiring performance. In the *vesha* of *Chhel Batau*, Shankarlal Nayak (of Kantharavi) and Manilal Nayak (of Changa) gave brilliant portrayals in the roles of Batau and Mohana, respectively.

*Leela*, a contemporary social satire, was performed on the last day by the artistes of the Darpana Academy. The play, written by Bakul Tripathi, well-known for his humorous writing, was inspired by the *Bhavai* form and directed by Damini Mehta and Kailash Pandya.

The keen interest and enthusiastic response shown by the audience on all days certainly indicates interest in the revival of *Bhavai*.

—GOVERDHAN PANCHAL





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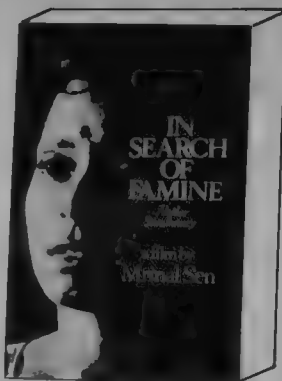
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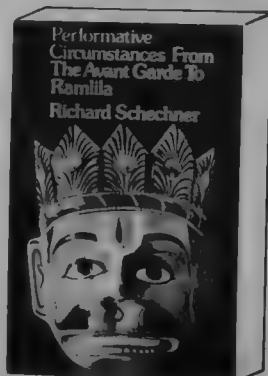
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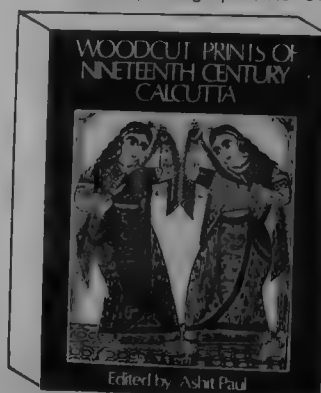
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## Book Reviews

SIVA IN DANCE, MYTH AND ICONOGRAPHY by Anne-Marie Gaston, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1982, Rs. 200.00 (*In English*).

Scholars and dancers alike have been fascinated by the similarity of approach and techniques of execution in the twin arts of sculpture and dance in the Indian tradition. Some scholars were led to a study of dance through a keen observation of the sculptural form, and some dancers have been led to a study of sculptural iconography through an experience of dance. Anne-Marie Gaston belongs to the second category. As a student of Bharatanatyam and Odissi, she was struck by the similarities and differences in the depiction of the Nataraja in the two styles. This led her to discover and appreciate the sculptural representations in Orissa and in South Indian sculpture, particularly bronzes. Naturally, this obliged her to study the iconography, the common myth underlying these depictions and ultimately to analyse and classify both pose and movements. For the analysis, she draws heavily upon her experience as a dancer, the point from where she begins her exploration. She restricts herself largely to the iconography of Nataraja, but also includes other forms where he is seen dancing, such as the Gajasurasamharāmurti and Tripurantaka.

The first chapter briefly surveys the place of dance in Indian society, with special reference to the emergence of the *devadasi* system. Despite some debatable and sweeping generalisations, the chapter has valuable information on the status of the *devadasi*-s in the early part of the twentieth century. The material is culled from the Census Commission's reports, records of legislative debates and Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*. Had this material been better organised, a clearer picture would have emerged of the place and role of the *devadasi*-s in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Flashbacks of Puranic mythology, twelfth-century South Indian inscriptions, legends and historical accounts of travellers, the Portuguese among others, make interesting reading despite the lack of a rigorous structure in the presentation of this material. The author admits that these are only scattered references which shed light on dance and dancers. The chapter does not constitute an integral entry into the main theme of the book.

In the next chapter, the author deals with the formalisation of Indian dance. Her sources are well-known, namely the *Natyashastra*, the *Abhinaya Darpana* and the *Vishnudharmottara Purana*. Appropriately, she concentrates on the sculptural representation of the *karana*-s in the temples of South India, ranging from Brhadishvara to the Vrddhachalam and Tiruvannamalai. Although the subject has been dealt with at considerable length and in detail by many scholars, including Sivaramamurti, Raghavan and the present reviewer, some of the observations of Anne-Marie Gaston are fresh and perceptive. For example, she notices that the depiction of the *karana*-s in the Vrddhachalam Temple is particularly interesting on account of the fact that two figures are included in each panel suggesting the beginning and the end of a movement. Convincing also is the statement that the *karana*-s depicted on the temples of Chidambaram, Tiruvannamalai and Vrddhachalam are closer to the Bharatanatyam body position than those in Tanjore because of the marked deflection of the hip in the latter. She is also correct in

observing that the difference between Bharatanatyam and Odissi lies in the basic stance, *ardhamandali* in one case, the *tribhanga* in the other and the difference in the movements of the torso.

The crux of the study begins with Chapter Three where the Nataraja images are classified. The fourth chapter is entitled *Varieties of Nataraja*. In Chapter Five, the author considers the attributes or what she prefers to call 'components' of the Nataraja image. A chapter is devoted to other dancing images of Shiva, and the final one to *Decorative Dancing Figures*. Although each of these chapters are inter-related, the author presents what, in her view, is a totally new system of classification based on static positions in Chapter Three. This classification is applied to the varieties of the Nataraja image, the other dancing images and the groups of decorative dance panels.

As a dancer, she chooses the placement and position of the feet as the main criteria for the classification. This is unexceptional, as the foot contact placement and direction determine, in a large measure, the pose adopted. Based on these criteria, she arrives at five types called A to E, with sub-divisions of the type A into five, and category C into two. In classical terminology, Type A corresponds to all that we understand by the generic term *ardhamandali*, with both feet in contact with the ground; in short, *sama* in *ardhamandali*. Type B corresponds to *urdhvajanu*; Type C to *bhujangatrasita*; Type D to *lalatatilaka* and Type E to *kunchita*. From the point of view of kinetics, as also the manuals of both dance and sculpture, this classification is logical and implicit in the concept of *sthana-s* (positions) and the *chari-s* enunciated in the *Natyashastra*. It is surprising that the author did not use the *sthana-s* as a point of reference for her classification. She takes either individual movements of the feet (i.e. *padabhedha* denoting position and contact with the ground) or the *karana* which is a full cadence of movement and not a pose. As has been pointed out by the present reviewer elsewhere, the identification of a sculptural depiction of movement with the description of a *karana* in a text can at best be an approximation of the initial, intermediary or final phrase of a continuous movement. The sculptural form can only arrest a moment to suggest movement before and after, but cannot be the full cadence. Subject to this fundamental limitation of understanding, the analysis and classification are logical and provide lucid explanations of the system of movement and pose. The illustrations are clear and well-organised, moving from full foot contacts to only toe or ball of foot to heel in what is commonly understood as the *ardhamandali*, the *chauka* and *tribhanga* stances of Bharatanatyam and Odissi respectively. For a dancer, this is elementary and constitutes the basic exercises governing the *adavu-s* and the *arasa-s* of each of the two styles. For those trying to analyse the logic of the groupings of the *adavu-s* and the *arasa-s*, this should be educative, and the author might well have stressed this aspect. The illustrations of the feet and leg positions and movements are supported by photographs of *hasta-s*, also popularly called *mudra-s*. A selection of those relevant to Shiva is made and references to texts are provided. The material, though familiar, can be a useful aid to young dancers for correct usage. Returning, however, to her basic classification, one has to point out that the groupings are not as new as claimed because the *Natyashastra* builds its system of movement from positions and movements of individual limbs and parts to a combination and, inherent to the total articulation, is the basic stance or *sthana* from which movement begins. An analysis of the logic of the classification of the *sthana-s* would have given an easy clue.

In Chapter Four, the same classification is applied to the sculptural depiction of Nataraja; there is a chronological summary of the sculptures of Nataraja in different regions of India. Table 4 is a concise and useful guide for locating the five types of Nataraja images in different regions and periods. The author's conclusions after this brief survey are sound. One would tend to agree with her that there is a gradual reduction in the variety of poses used for Nataraja between the first and third period (i.e. between the first Gupta images of Nachna to those of the late eastern and Vijayanagara period). Illustrations from stone and bronze sculpture are well chosen particularly from Orissa. This material is ample proof of the fairly extensive field work done by the researcher and her capacity for reorganisation. For those who do not wade through the monumental works on the subject by Gopinath Rao and Sivaramamurti, this volume will be a handy reference manual. The sequence of reproductions follows the author's primary classification. For the student of dance, this book will be a welcome addition to works on this subject and, for the art historian, it may present a fresh approach based on dance rather than pure iconography.

The same approach is followed in presenting an analysis of the other dancing images of Shiva such as Gajasurasamharamurti, Ardhanarishvara, Bhikshatana and others. A question may well be asked about the rationale of employing say the *urdhvajanu* (Gaston's Type B) for the Kalarimurti as also the Gajasurasamharamurti or why the Gajasurasamharamurti is seen in *urdhvajanu* and *alidha sthana* and in what Gaston classifies as C II (i.e. the famous Darasuram stone sculpture from the Tanjore gallery). The explanation offered is that these are regional differences, but perhaps further analysis would have shown that there were other explanations also because there are marked differences within the same region and period.

The chapter on *Decorative Dancing Figures* is an aggregation of what may be called dance panels. An analysis of the full panel, comprising musicians and the architectural placing, whether niche or corner or ceiling, would have provided other insights. The nature of dwarfing, elongation, use of mass, and resultant linear rhythms of sculpture could have been identified. A dancer's perception would clearly see the difference between a figure come alive as dance and another stiff wooden one, while following the same pose and typology. Perhaps later, Anne-Marie Gaston can re-examine these very examples from that point of view.

Two helpful Appendices and Glossary follow. The book, based on a thesis presented for a Master's Degree, is evidence of competent research and ability to correlate and classify. As a first work of a serious student of dance and sculpture, it is welcome. One looks forward to a further pursuit of this and other subjects by her and other dancers who are now rightly looking at 'dance' not only as repetitive performance but as a window to arrive at an understanding of the larger canvas of Indian arts.

— KAPILA VATSYAYAN

SHOBHILLU SAPTASVARA. Edited, compiled and published by Savithri Rajan and Michael Nixon, Madras, 1982, Rs. 25.00 (*In English and Tamil*).

*Svara*-s are articulated sweet sounds capable of being uttered and pronounced, concrete in nature, while *Nada*, the all-pervasive, ambrosial sound, is all abstract and absolute. Almost every technical term in music is obviously self-explanatory. स्वतो रज्जयति श्रोतुं चित्तमसंस्वरउच्यते (*Sangita Ratnakara*);

स्वयं यो राजते यस्मात् तस्मादेष स्वरस्मृतः (*Brihaddeshi*). These time-honoured definitions of *svara* by the *purvacharyas* can hardly be improved. But for the conception of *svara*, all our music would remain sound abstract. (*Nada kara*), incapable of being deciphered and identified as solid shapes and entities of defined characteristics, known technically as *raga*-s, expressed through different media—musical forms or musical compositions—solid facts of *raga* expressions. Thus, *svara* forms the very basis of music.

The sanctity and the holy purport of the *svara*-s have been explained very well by Thyagaraja in several of his *kriti*-s. One such expression is set forth in his *kriti* in *raga* Jaganmohini in the *Pallavi* itself:

*Shobhillu Saptasvara*  
*Sundaruta bhajimpave manasa.*

The book is significantly titled—one of its prime virtues. The contents of the book confer on it the status of a *grantha*: it is a perfect endorsement of the assiduous practice of the varying grades of *svara* exercises carried out with a dogged tenacity of purpose to achieve mastery and perfection in music. The material is of importance and merit because Savithri Rajan draws inspiration from a great master, the late Bramhasri Tiger Varadachariar. I have also had the privilege of being trained by him.

*Shobhillu Saptasvara* is a valuable amalgam embodying the wisdom of more than one votary of the art of music. Though the name of *Pallavi Svara Kalpavalli* is familiar in the world of music, the works *Sangita Sarvartha Sara Sangraha* and *Sangitananda Ratnakara* are happy and welcome introductions in this field.

The efficacious value of singing *sahitya*-s for the graded *svara* exercises is more a matter of individual conviction. *Gita*-s are more ideal pedagogical lessons for the initiation and introduction of *sahitya*-s to students of music. By the time the students are prepared to sing some simple musical forms with the introductions of *sahitya*-s, they should be drilled almost mechanically to build up their *svara* and *laya jnana*. Purity and chastity of notes (meaning, not necessarily only flat, unadorned notes) is all that should matter, independent of any thought of *sahitya*. Singing to solfeggio and *akara sadhana* would suffice and its value can hardly be overestimated.

The *Dhyana shloka*-s given for the *Suladi Sapta Tala*-s are thought-provoking and ideal. It becomes imperative for a serious student of music to have at least a working knowledge of Sanskrit in addition to his own mother tongue.

The characteristics of *Gita*-s are very clearly explained in this book. Normally, in the *sahitya* of *Lakshana Gita*-s, the treatment of the *lakshana*-s of *raga*-s is to be expounded in simpler terms. But in the *Lakshana Gita*-s, for instance, in *Gaula*, *Saranganata* and *Nutanachandrika* (pp. 81 to 87), this aspect is conspicuously absent though a number of technical terms are categorised therein. The *raga* *Nutanachandrika* is reported to have been placed under two different *mela*-s—under *Sriraga* (22nd *mela*) in *Sangita Sarvartha Sara Sangrahamu* and under the 60th *mela* in *Ganabhaskaramu*. The *Lakshana Gita* in *Nutanachandrika* is perhaps the 'solitary reaper' in this *raga*.

The inclusion of *Ranjani*, (comparatively speaking, an offshoot), is somewhat strange especially in the midst of the galaxy of *raga*-s of repute like *Purvagaula*, *Saranganata*, *Maruvadhanyasi*, *Samanta*, *Gummakhambhoji* etc. Incidentally, it may be noted that the *Sankirtana*-s of *Annamacharya* abound in *Saranganata* and *Samanta*. *Gummakhambhoji* and *Purvagaula* are also not uncommon in the *Kirtana* plates of *Annamacharya*. We have only one stroke of an *avarta* of *Gummakhambhoji* in one of the *Raga Mala Gita*-s included in the work.

The *Lakshana Gita* in *Mukhari* (composed by *Tiger Varadachariar*) may be beyond the comprehension of an ordinary student of music; it deserves to be learnt by a *vidwan*: the *sahitya*-s of both the *Gita*-s of *Tiger Varadachariar* are of a high order.

One wishes that the authors had at least dealt with the main characteristics of *Prabandha*-s, an omission which, one hopes, will be rectified in future editions. Similarly, a better treatment of *Suladi* could have been included in the book. A few more *Suladi*-s and *Prabandha*-s would have added to the prestige and value of the work. One might mention here that there is available, one *Desi Suladi* of *Annamacharya*—a *Saptha Raga Tala Malika* form set in the *Suladi Sapta tala*-s in the *raga*-s *Malavagaula*, *Ramakriya*, *Varali*, *Bauli*, *Padi*, *Nata* and *Sriraga* respectively. This is the only *Suladi* of its kind in the *Telugu* language.

In the field of music literature, the work of *Savithri Rajan* and her pupil *Michael Nixon*, being immensely useful to students of music at different levels, should be of perennial value. This book provides ample scope for the inculcation of a high degree of musical culture; it is not a mere textbook for the novice but for teachers who would benefit a great deal through acquaintance with its contents.

The *Anubandha*-s provide very useful information with regard to the contents of the work.

— S. R. JANAKIRAMAN

GULER PAINTING by M. S. Randhawa and D. S. Randhawa, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1982, Rs. 100.00 (*In English*).

MODERN INDIAN PAINTINGS. From the Collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. Produced and published by the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, 1982, (*In English*).

JOURNAL OF ARTS & IDEAS, October-December 1982. Published by G. P. Deshpande, Delhi, Rs. 8.00 (*In English*)

What a galaxy of names and how formidable to reckon with! It is not without some feeling of fear of treading on some pet corns that I begin this review.

To start with, let us take *Guler Painting*. Probably more than any other single person, Dr. M. S. Randhawa has made available the treasures of miniature painting in the Punjab and the hill states. Through book after book on this subject, he has made the experts and the lay public aware of the great achievements in art. Several books were brought out by The National Museum. They were well-produced and available at prices which were obviously subsidised, and, therefore, easily accessible to all those who were interested.

The volume under review, brought out by the Publications Division, does not compare too favourably in its standards of production and pricing it at Rs. 100/- certainly does not make for easy availability. A comparison with some of the Lalit Kala Akademi's productions is inevitable. The Akademi's portfolios are still within the easy reach of art lovers even though the number of reproductions is smaller.

It seems that, in some cases, old blocks have been reused (in the book under review)—and with disastrous effects. Compare Plate No. X entitled "Sight of the beloved" in *Guler Painting* with Plate No. 12 entitled "The Surprised Maiden" in *Kangra Valley Painting* by the same author first published in 1954. It is the same painting with a different name and, regrettably, a much poorer reproduction, in which, quite apart from the lack of crispness, there isn't even a proper registration of colour.

The authors have explained at great length the history, geography and social customs of the area. They have commented on the pattern of patronage which was feudal but, nonetheless, capable of producing great art. This gives us something to think about. For today, we have lost touch with known patrons and have to deal with faceless committees and bureaucratic departments. Quite understandably, our predecessors managed to work in and create a general sense of style while we, with our democratic pretensions, have produced a plethora of eccentric and ego-centered styles.

Admirable and enlightening though the text is in its explanations, I cannot help wishing that the authors had dealt with the distinguishing aspects of picture-making which formed the core of the total sense of style.

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A scarlet cover with diagonal white writing declaring *Modern Indian Paintings* encloses a publication of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. It was printed in great haste to coincide with a special exhibition flown out to The Hirshorn Museum in Washington D.C. at the time of Mrs. Gandhi's visit to the United States last year.

There are four colour reproductions of doubtful quality. For some strange reason, the same four are also reproduced in black-and-white. The exhibition sought to give a nutshell impression of modern Indian art—fifty painters being represented by one painting each and all of them from the National Gallery's collection! Like all digests, neither the exhibition nor the accompanying catalogue does any justice to the totality of what has been produced. In an effort to exercise a democratic choice and so placate the painters, the exhibition (and hence the catalogue) lacks focus. It is a motley collection of works which do not relate to each other in building up a concerted and coherent point of view. Though it is true that the scene is broad and seemingly without definition, it becomes all the more necessary for the commissioner(s) of such exhibitions to exercise a hard choice and project a point of view. If we are trying to make inroads into the competitive art scene in the west, we will have to abandon our casual and free-for-all attitudes. (In this sense, the exhibition of Contemporary Indian Art at The Royal Academy, London, was a much greater success.) Whilst on the subject of the catalogue of the National Gallery of Modern Art, I should, perhaps, mention that the short bio-data of each artist at the back is a useful appendage; it might have served a better purpose if the details had been more accurate. My professional qualifications have been upgraded and I am listed as having studied under Leger and André Lhote which, of course, I never did.

The catalogue is prefaced by an introduction by the Gallery's Director, Dr. L. P. Sihare, who affirms his belief in the Indian artist's ability to draw on his own tradition and simultaneously to make his art modern. What exactly is meant by "modern" is not spelt out though there is a lurking suspicion that, to gain credibility, local and indigenous sources must make some alignments with one or more movements which followed in historical progression in Europe. The real problem is for artists to define for themselves what is significant and real now, without seeking copy-book assistance from "our ancient cultural heritage" or the avant-garde movements in the west.

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*The Journal of Arts & Ideas*, which has a formidable list of Editors, Associate Editors, Contributing Editors and Advisory Editors, drawn from various disciplines, seems like a magazine which has come to stay. The publication is straightforwardly left-wing in its ideas and it is, therefore, a trifle amusing to see the paintings and drawings appear as advertisements (that is how the magazine is financed). Vivan Sundaram's much-reproduced "Guddo" has Mukand Iron & Steel at the bottom of the page, Bhupen Khakhar's "You Can't Please All" has Nirula's Corner House (which obviously tries to please all), and Jogen Chowdhury's bulbous and tumour-ridden figure with an outstretched arm has, appropriately, "Thumbs Up, The Refreshing Cola" under it. But levity apart, the Journal contains

some fine, thought-provoking articles such as Ashok Mitra's *Neo-Colonialism: A Nervous Note*. Quite unlike most left-wing writers, who depend for their success by berating bourgeois ideologies with jargon which is as dead as a sledge-hammer, Ashok Mitra questions the almost secure position adopted by most progressives who seem to be doing no more than adapting well-known classics for current circulation. Not that there is any harm in producing "Mother Courage" or any other of Brecht's plays in various Indian languages, but what has happened to the wellsprings of creative originality? In a characteristic sentence, he asserts: "*Battleship Potemkin* was possible only following the Revolution, not before. I therefore remain a sceptic. We cannot opt out, we must not get off, but we must not be presumptuous. There can be no free art without a free society; freedom for the masses is possible only under a socialist sky. Till then, in this country, our 'progressive' plays will be, most of the time, either masquerades or mimes, and the same goes for the products of the other visual performing arts. That is no reason for these efforts being discarded or discouraged. They should not, however, be trumpeted as liberators of the spirit either."

This is well and succinctly put, but raises certain questions which I find difficult to reconcile. Was there no great art before the Revolution? Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, for instance? True, what they wrote may not come under the term "free art" but are their works inferior to Eisenstein's? And, will a "free society" offer no constraints at all? Our experience of post-revolutionary Russia would suggest otherwise. Utopian societies can only exist as ideas which is reason enough for artists to work for them. Absolute Freedom can exist only in Death—and until that happens, we can but strive towards making the world a little more free, a bit more bearable and some of us may even write a play or two, or paint a few pictures which may be true of our conditions, without seeking the assistance of renowned masters. In spite of the inexorable forces of history, or the certain knowledge of the world as doomed to extinction, the human spirit, in its purest moments, stands apart to declare itself without any trumpeting.

As I write this, the second number of the *Journal of Arts & Ideas* has appeared and carries a most stimulating interview with Marquez, ably translated by Kalpana Sahn. There are other articles which promise to be equally interesting. The front and rear covers carry four drawings by Vivan Sundaram. Possibly, by the time the next issue is prepared, the Associate Editors (of whom Vivan is one) will find other artists worthy of reproduction, even though they may not possess Vivan's revolutionary vision.

—KRISHEN KHANNA

DANCES OF THE GOLDEN HALL by Ashoke Chatterjee, with photographs by Sunil Janah, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi, 1979. Price not stated (*In English*).

Shanta Rao is a dancer of extraordinary vitality, exuberance and presence, and one of the very few whose career extends from the early days of the Indian dance revival to the present time. A work on her art and life is, therefore, welcome.

"How did you become a dancer?" she was once asked. "I saw that there was nothing else for me," she replied, not batting an eye. And, on another occasion, questioned about the spirituality of Indian dance, she answered: "I am bereft of spirituality. I only know work and sweat."

The book is, in many ways, an extension and amplification of these two statements. But the work has to be examined at three levels: the contribution of the dancer, the author, and the photographer.

Shanta Rao is known as a relentless zealot who has worked with single-minded determination to live for nothing but her dance. And regardless of whether others have extolled or decried her art, she has clung steadfast to her ideals of each of the styles she pursues as she visualises it. This, and her passionate involvement with the different styles, amounting to total dedication and surrender, have been brought out admirably by the author. In fact, though the text occasionally veers into other, though related, areas, there is no let-up in keeping the image of Shanta, the person and the dancer, and of her manifold trials and travails, in sharp focus. But, again, all what is said is not entirely new. Beryl de Zoete, in her book *The Other Mind*, has dwelt at considerable length upon Shanta Rao's life and work, and, much earlier, there was another work *Shanta and her Art* by G. Venkatachalam.

The biography under review is also intended as a document of her art brought alive through a whole range of photographs. Unfortunately, only a handful of these pictures are action shots, while the rest are posed. And, though the photographs well underscore the vast range of Shanta Rao's technique and acumen, very few of them are vibrant enough to communicate the phenomenal intensity and prowess of her dance. That apart, some of the pictures are hardly flattering to the dancer in respect of her image as a perfectionist. Nor does the oft-recurring background of the sea, temple panels or a mottled wall add anything to the impact. Captions to the pictures given only as a supplement to the text are far from convenient to the reader, who has constantly to refer back and forth if he is to understand the illustrations. The end-papers, for their part, are too cluttered.

The Glossary is intended to be helpful, but it trips at many places. *Abhinaya*, for example, is not "gestural expression of the face and limbs" but far more. *Ashtapadi* is not "verses of invocation or benediction" but a poetic composition carrying 8 cantos. A *Karana* is not "a fundamental pose" but a dance-unit. *Kuravenji* in Tamil does not mean "a gypsy"; the word for that is *Kurathi*. *Natyakala* is not "the art of the dance"; it is the art of the theatre, which



comprises drama, dance and music. The old name for Bharata Natyam is not *Sadir Natyam* but *Sadir Nautch*. *Swaram* is not "musical scale" but musical note. *Tirmanam* is not "the finale to an *adavu*" but the finale to a passage of dance composed of *adavu*-s. And there are several other similar lapses.

The production of the book could do with some improvement. The reproductions are far too faint to stand out pictorially. If only one colour picture could be accommodated, surely the choice could have been better; besides, Shanta Rao standing in Mohini Attam outfit in the niche of a Pallava temple is all too incongruous. The binding of the book is fragile, for the leaves come apart with only a little handling.

While there are any number of biographies of dancers in the west, India has yet to make a concerted effort in this direction. The work on Shanta Rao is more or less a pioneering attempt, and it is hoped that this will prompt other writers, dancers, photographers and publishers to collaborate and add to the pathetically meagre literature in the genre available at present.

—MOHAN KHOKAR

VAISHANAVA-SANGITASHASTRA of Narahari Chakravarty, edited by Guru Bipin Singh, translated by Gajanan Ranade Shastri and Madanlal Vyas, published by Chaukhamba Orientalia, Varanasi, 1982, Rs. 60.00 (*In Sanskrit and Hindi*).

The *kirtana* tradition, ushered in by Shri Chaitanya (15th—16th century A.D.), was enriched with the employment of *alapa*, *raga*, *tala* etc. by Narottam Thakur who had studied music under masters like Haridasa Gosvami and Raghunathadasa Gosvami, the direct disciple of Svarupa Damodara. He popularised the traditional *pavana sangita* and in particular *rasa* or *lila kirtana*. In the eighteenth century, Narahari Chakravarty of Saiyadabad (West Bengal), who was known as Ghanashyamadasa, carried forward this *padavali kirtana* tradition in the form of classical *Dhrupada* music and wrote about nine works. Of these, three are published here. They are edited by Guru Bipin Singh, and printed in the Devanagari script, with Hindi translation.

*Ragaratnakara* (pp. 1-51) discusses the traditional classification of the *raga*-s viz. *sampurna*, *shadava*, *audava* and *samkirna* and dwells on topics like the concept of *raga*, the hours for the presentation of different *raga*-s. There is also an enumeration of *raga*-s and *ragini*-s and the *ragamurti*-s.

The eighth chapter of the *Gita-chandrodaya* forms the second text (pp. 52-100). It includes many compositions in different *raga*-s, and deals with topics like *nada*, *shruti*, the characteristics of an excellent, average and bad singer, the different kinds of musical instruments and the purpose of music. The author's incomplete text *Talarnava* (pp. 103-130) is also included, illustrating and defining various *tala*-s, their *matra*-s, *anga*, *pramana*, *graha*, *jati*, *kala*, *laya*, *yati*, *prastara* etc. Unfortunately, the complete text of *Gaurakrishnalilamrita* (except the first twenty-five lines printed herein), illustrating different *tala*-s, is not available.

The third text comprises the fifth chapter of *Shribhaktiratnakara* (pp. 133-364). While describing the journey of Shrinivasa Narottama and Shriraghava to Vraja, topics like *sangita*, *nada*, *shruti*, *svara*, *grama*, *murchchhana*, *jati*, *varna*, *alankara*, *tala*, *laya*, *yati*, *nritya*, *nritya*, *abhinaya*, *mudra* and *nayaka-nayika-bheda* are analysed. More interesting are the many songs of *Radha-Krishna-lila* in different *raga*-s.

Narahari's texts are to be interpreted in the light of the seventeenth-eighteenth century musical works like *Damodara*, *Tarangini* and *Hridayakautuka*. His texts record a number of quotations from different musical works, thus providing variant readings for further critical study. We also have quotations from a text (*Sangitamala* of Mammata) which is not available even today. The three texts indicate the revival of the *Shastriya Sangita* among the Vaishnava musicians of Bengal.

The editing of the text is satisfactory. The quotation (p. 7) from the *Sangitakaumudi* appears to be incomplete as can be seen from *shloka* 33. There are at least two places where the quotations from the same text are not uniform; cf. v.176 (p. 36) and v.2786 (p. 203); v.215 (p. 45) and v.2793 (p. 204). Indices of quotations, topics and verses would have been of some help to readers.

Gajanan Ranade Shastri's translation of the original Sanskrit and Madanlal Vyas' translation of the original Bengali are lucid and useful in understanding the original text.

Guru Bipin Singh is to be commended for editing these texts and enriching the range of *Vaishnava* musical literature.

—SURESH UPADHYAYA

A PROFILE OF INDIAN CULTURE by Krishna Chaitanya, Clarion Books, New Delhi, 1982, Rs. 195.00 (*In English*).

This relevant book, with a somewhat irrelevant and recent 'Rajasthan' painting on its dust-jacket, has been written with a clear intent. Krishna Chaitanya is concerned here not only with providing for the reader, both Indian and foreign, a rapid overview of the culture of India as it has developed over nearly 5000 years: his aim is to point out its relevance to the context in which modern man lives. Others have done this before him, others including Ananda Coomaraswamy, who wrote, as early as 1915, that fine essay: "What has India contributed to human welfare?" But Krishna Chaitanya brings, naturally, his own perceptions to bear on the theme with an eye on where mankind seems to have landed itself in our own times. Repeatedly, as he paints in swift outline the individual features of India, its thought, its view of life, its concern with the mind and its many layers, its perception of the human predicament, its poetry and its art, he returns again and again to the way in which many of India's insights can help alter the view

that man takes of himself and his situation today. Thus, if he speaks at some length of the Indian vision of a cosmic order, *rita*, it is in the hope that it can, somehow, "help us today to halt the suicidal exploitation by man of nature and his own brethren"; when he speaks of the Indian vision of the fourfold goals of man's life, it is because they might, just conceivably, help in "restoring meaning to the life-trajectories of men who are today so much self-alienated"; he presents the world-view of the great poets of India for it achieves "a finer synthesis of the transcendental and the temporal than the philosophical systems". It is easy to see thus where he is heading. His avowed wish is to stimulate fresh thinking in areas that can only be of the greatest concern to man today.

All this Krishna Chaitanya does—not in a dry, pontificating manner—but engagingly, using extensive excerpts from the great texts of India, ranging from poetic texts and philosophical treatises to myths and histories. It is with care and selectiveness that he cites passages, and with his help one is reminded of the great richness and the beauty of a heritage. When he cites Vedic passages, such as this one addressing the Earth:

'Whatever I dig from thee, may it be speedily regenerated!  
O purifier, may we not injure thy heart!  
Earth, my Mother, set me securely with bliss in full accord with Heaven.'

he brings us very close to the heart of the matter as far as the relationship of man with Nature is concerned. But he also keeps us close to the Indian vision when he quotes, in a totally different context, from a great poet of our times, Vallathol (of Kerala), this homage to land which vibrates with joy:

'Like serving maids, the ocean waves  
With creamy foam decorate your feet  
With silver anklets. Never wholly pleased  
With the effect, unwearied they unite  
Them, and again and again try them on.'

Krishna Chaitanya quickly takes us, in this manner, from thought to thought, period to period, speaking of the geography that has fashioned India's view of life, of the sacramental aspects of life and death, the rise of some religions and the assimilation of others, the coming in of influences from outside, bringing gifts that, he says, we should 'gratefully remember'. He speaks of poetry and of art and points to integrative thought without losing sight, however, of what, has gone wrong with ourselves and what it is that led to the decay of many features, the ossification of some, and the gross distortion of others.

There is thus much to take in and absorb from what Krishna Chaitanya has to say in this work. It is the essence that he is drawing attention to. In the process he is pointing to many of the things that Rabindranath Tagore, in his own, poetic manner, spoke of when he wrote: "I shall be born in India again and again. With all her poverty, misery and rigidity, I love India best.... You (India) have taught the king to give up worldly riches and live a simple life. You have taught the hero to show mercy to the enemy on the field of battle. You have preached the message of disinterested work and service. You

have taught the householder to expand his home and include in it the neighbours, the friends, the relations, the guests, the poor and the needy. You have taught the lesson of self-restraint in the enjoyment of life." In Krishna Chaitanya's comment and analysis, however, remarkably free as it is of prejudice and narrow-mindedness, there creeps in, on occasions, a superior air, the feeling that he is talking down to his readers, as though engaged in a lecture to an audience in a classroom setting. This can only irk the reader, as do the repeated references, not always or necessarily relevant, to European thinkers and writers. If at all comparisons on this scale were necessary, one would have thought that Krishna Chaitanya would look at other cultures too, prominently those like the Chinese, for obvious reasons.

But, in some ways, the least satisfactory of the features of this otherwise handsomely produced book, is the section on illustrations. Not only is the choice rather haphazard, but the reproductions, especially those in colour, are indifferent in quality and errors have crept into captions. Thus a Basholi painting of the *Gita Govinda* (colour plate 8) is labelled as from the Deccan, and a Bikaner work (plate 7) is described as from Basholi. The caption of the Mathura 'Bacchanalian Scene' puts it into the 13th century A.D. and virtually none of the descriptions of illustrations give any indication of date or period. Could it be, one wonders, that the author and the publisher assumed that this knowledge was already available to the readers? Also, in presenting this odd assortment of pictures, were they availing themselves of a standard group that some given agency chose fit to provide them?

—B. N. GOSWAMY

MEE DURGA KHOTE by Durga Khote. Published by Majestic Book Stall, Bombay, 1982. Rs. 35.00 (*In Marathi*).

*Mee Durga Khote*, the autobiography of Durga Khote, well-known for her roles in Marathi and Hindi films, embodies a great many virtues.

Though she had the advantages of a wealthy and educated family background, Durgabai was compelled to adopt acting in films as a profession at the somewhat 'mature' age of thirty. Now in her seventy-fifth year, she still regards films primarily as a profession. However, the dedication with which she poured her talent in her work is reflected in the autobiography: it is not merely the story of a successful working woman.

Durgabai has given an interesting account of her domestic life before she joined films and of film production in the studios of Prabhat and New Theatres. In this regard, the chapters 'Ladanche Ghar' and 'Arunodaya Prabhat' are beautifully written and shed light not just on Durgabai's personal life but also on Maharashtra's cultural scene at that time.

One of the salient features of the book is Durgabai's description of certain dramatic episodes, covering a span of two or three generations, and highlighting the economic constraints within the family. Having chosen this profession, she was constantly anguished by the fact that she had to forego normal family life.

Durgabai's husband—Vishwanath Khote—died suddenly of a heart attack when he was quite young. By a sad coincidence, her younger son, Harin, died at the same age as his father did and of an identical affliction! Harin's widow, Vijaya, had to rear two sons who were then almost the same age as Durgabai's own were when she lost her husband. But, there was a world of difference in the way the two women faced their circumstances—so much so, that, in the beginning, Durgabai could not bring herself to understand her daughter-in-law. She did not quite realise that, placed in a similar situation as hers, the younger generation does not lead a frustrated existence nor does it expect or rely on the support and sympathy of elders. This home-truth dawned on her when her granddaughter casually remarked, "Don't you know you can kill people by your kindness or greatness, my dear loving Granny?" Incidents such as these indicate the differences in attitude of two generations and some of the realities of Indian family life. It is in this context that one can understand the words "Thank you Farrokh" addressed by Durgabai to Vijaya's second husband who lovingly accepted the responsibility of rearing Vijaya's two sons by her first marriage. This gratitude springs from Durgabai's deep love of her grandsons. As one reads about the various tense moments in her life, one realises that Durgabai has now achieved a relatively detached stance. Because of her temperament, Durgabai does not arrive at a definite and final reckoning of the joys and sorrows in her life. Time and again the maternal instinct in her is in sore straits, which touches a chord in the reader's mind.

Durgabai sometimes admits to being lonely because, in the film industry, though one is constantly surrounded by people, genuine relationships are few. But, on the whole, she feels that, given the circumstances, she coped as best as she could and concludes, "I am not unhappy!" Uneasy at the mingling of western and Indian cultural influences in her family, she, like her granddaughter, asks herself, "What is our background?" One wishes she had delved deeper in trying to answer this question. That she doesn't, is one of the limitations of the book.

Initially, Durgabai played the role of the heroine in films, but later she went on to enact the roles of mother-in-law, aunt, grandmother etc. The impact that these roles created on the minds of viewers was not so much on account of her great acting ability as because of a sweetness, partly inherent, and partly the result of her association with the legendary Bal Gandharva. Durgabai was fortunate enough to have watched him at close quarters in his days of glory. This was, in a way, a kind of training in acting. It left a mark on her distinguished performances on the Marethi stage—in plays like *Bhaubandki* and *Vaijayanti*. Durgabai's memories and assessment of Bal Gandharva are extremely moving!

Had Durgabai been able to offer the same insights into her experiences as an actress, this account of her life would have been more interesting and certainly more complete, for the picture that emerges from the book is that of a home-loving woman, not that of an accomplished and successful actress. Is that too much to expect from an actress who has spent nearly fifty years in the film industry?

—SAROJINI VAIDYA

THE WORLD OF MUSIC, Journal of the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (Berlin) in association with the International Music Council (UNESCO), D-2940 Wilhelmshaven, Berlin.

*The World of Music*, Journal of the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (Berlin), in association with the International Music Council (UNESCO), is in its twenty-fifth year. It is published three times a year. The articles, book reviews and reports of competitions, awards, festivals etc. are published in English, with abstracts in French and German. Among the recent issues are numbers devoted to specific subjects. They deal with aspects of ethnomusicology which are not just of temporary interest but will remain important source material for a long time to come. Vol. XXII, No. 1 (1980), for instance, is devoted to masks. As Ivan Vandro, the Editor, explains: 'The use of masks is closely linked to a ritual, a ceremony or form of theatre in all of which music plays an essential role.' The articles included in this number deal with masks in Javanese Dance-Dramas, in Noh Theatre, in Indian Dances and Swiss Folk Forms. The artistic symbolism of the painted faces in Chinese Opera is also analysed. There is a significant contribution on the 'cham' (masked dances) of Padmasambhava in the monastery of Hemis (Ladakh).

Vol. XXIII, No. 2 (1981) contains papers presented at an international conference, held in September 1980, on 'The Study on World Music: Perspectives in Methodology'. Here a variety of subjects is touched. Prof. Mantle Hood writes on 'Historical Reconstructions for Oral Traditions of Music'. 'Methodological Problems in Determining the Juncture of the Social and the Musical' are discussed by J. H. Kwabena Nketia. 'The Application of Ethnomusicological Methods to Western Art Music' is described by Klaus Wachsmann and Simha Arom outlines 'New Perspectives for the Description of Orally Transmitted Music'. There is a description of 'A New Electronic Instrument for Musical Research: the S52'.

Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (1982) is devoted to Latin America and includes articles on several aspects of the music of this subcontinent. There are contributions on the indigenous music of Venezuela, on the history of musical instruments in the Andean countries, on music and musicians of African origin in Brazil, and on the Indian masks in, and the Marimbas of, Guatemala.

*The World of Music* offers readers a vivid glimpse of the musical traditions of various parts of the world and is an indispensable aid to those interested in comparative music studies.

—K. M.

## New Books on Art and Architecture

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\* \* \*

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\* \* \*

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Mian Goverdhan Singh. Foreword by Penelope Chetwode.

290 p., 24 colour illus., 8 line illus., 161 half-tone illus., map, Rs. 500/-, \$100

A well-illustrated and informative book, it describes, with unpretentious elegance, the development of art and architecture in Himachal Pradesh. There is an excellent bibliography and a guide map of art and architectural objects in the area.

\* \* \*

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## Record Reviews

BISMILLAH KHAN. Side One: Bhupal Todi. Side Two: Bageshree. HMV EASD 1512 (Stereo).

IN MEMORY OF D. V. PALUSKAR. Side One: *Bhajan-s*. Side Two: *Raga Shri*. HMV EALP 1263.

SHIVKUMAR SHARMA (Santoor) with ZAKIR HUSSAIN (Tabla). *Live Concert at Rang Bhavan, Bombay, '... When Time Stood Still'*. Record One: Side A—Kaunsi Kanhra (*Alap & Jod*). Side B—Kaunsi Kanhra (*Jod & Jhala*). Record Two: Side A—Kaunsi Kanhra (*Madhyalaya & Drut*). Side B—Mishra Kafi *Dhun & Ragamala*. EMI S/EMGE 12508/9 (Stereo).

LILT ON SITAR. Creations of Vijay Raghav Rao, Kartik Kumar, Shamim Ahmed and Zakir Hussain. MUSIC INDIA 2393 886 (Stereo).

MADHURANI SINGS GHALIB AND OTHERS. *Ghazal-s*. Music arranged by Anil Mohile. CBS IND. 1001 (Stereo).

SHANKAR DASGUPTA (Vocal). *Ghazal-s—Kuchh Yadein*. CBS IND. 1010 (Stereo).

GREAT GHAZAL-S—RUNA LAILA STYLE (Vocal). Music: Pandit Ghulam Kadir. EMI ECSD 2631 (Stereo).

JAGJIT SINGH AND CHITRA SINGH. *Live at Royal Albert Hall, London (29th April, 1982)*. EMI S/MFPE 1009/1010 (Stereo).

JAGJIT SINGH AND CHITRA SINGH (Vocal). *The Latest—Poet Sudarshan Faakir's Ghazal-s and Nazm-s*. CBS IND. 1013 (Stereo).

KAMAL AMROHI'S RAZIA SULTAN. Music Khaiyyaam. Produced by A. K. Misra. EMI PEASD 2076/77 (Stereo).

SADMA. Music: Ilaiyaraaja. Lyrics: Gulzar. CBS IND. 1016.

Among the best in the batch of recent releases sent for review by the recording companies are Ustad Bismillah Khan's album and the LP comprising the EPs of the late D. V. Paluskar.

Ustad Bismillah Khan has invested the *shenai* with dignity and prestige, revealing its potential as a solo instrument capable of presenting classical music on the concert platform. Here he presents Bhupal Todi and Bageshree. The *get*

in Jhaptala in Bhupal Todi evokes the haunting atmosphere of this *raga* and to suit its mood of serenity he has avoided fast *taan-s* and *jhala* of the sitar style. On Side Two, he interprets Bageshree as a graceful melody. He maintains throughout his usual standard of tunefulness and the attractive framework of note combination for which he is justly famous.

Most listeners of my generation are overcome with a feeling of nostalgia listening to D. V. Paluskar's classical music and *bhajan-s*. His voice has a *satvik* quality. His style appears simple and yet it succeeds in creating an impact on the listener's mind through a process which is difficult to pinpoint. This LP will, without doubt, find an honoured place in the collection of his admirers.

The other releases offer a mixed fare of instrumental music, songs from the original sound-track of films and *gazel* collections.

Shivkumar Sharma's Kaunsi Kanada, from a live concert in Rang Bhavan, affords ample proof of his mastery over the *santoor*, a mastery which enables him to create the effect of continuous prolonged notes in the initial *alap-s*. He executes wonderful *laya* patterns in his exposition of the *gat* in Roopak *tala* and the *drut gat* is, as always, scintillating. Zakir Hussain's accompaniment is inspiring, never too overwhelming and invariably complementary. The *dhun* in Kafi on the fourth side is lively and attractive.

*Lit on Sitar*, according to the sleeve jacket, presents the genius of Vijay Raghav Rao, Kartik Kumar, Shamim Ahmed and Zakir Hussain. Some of the pieces, like the *thumri* ensemble and *raga* Desh overtures, are repeats from earlier discs. The overall impression is that the disc might provide good background music for social occasions but cannot be regarded as material for serious listening.

Before evaluating the individual discs featuring *gazel-s*, it might be relevant to note a few elements, which form part of the style that has recently come into vogue in the rendering of *gazel-s*. The tunes, the tempo, the *sarangi* and *santoor* effects and a full orchestra accompaniment—all inhibit improvisation by the artiste and the 'set' *gazel* veers dangerously towards the *filmi geet*.

CBS presents two discs, one of Madhurani and the other of Shankar Dasgupta. Madhurani is a favourite of *gazel* fans and has become even more popular after her TV appearances. The first number on Side A (*Layi Hayat Aye*) in the *raga* Marwa, with a touch of *Pancham*, is undoubtedly the best on account of the flexibility of the voice, the delicate intonation and moving interpretation. But one expects more from an artiste of Madhurani's calibre and training. One looks for inspired improvisation—and unfortunately it is absent here. Every composition is in a fixed mould, right from the opening *santoor* piece to the note at the end. Anil Mohile's arrangement, with full orchestration, so typical of the current style, hinders spontaneity and though the lyrics are meaningful, the tunes to which they are set barely linger in the mind of the listener.

Shankar Dasgupta's voice is rich and resonant but not elastic or expressive enough. The lyrics and the musical compositions are easy to remember without being memorable.

Runa Laila's singing is full-throated. Endowed with natural tunefulness, her voice has a wide range and power of expression. In this particular disc, however, there are two limitations: she sings *gazel-s* already popularized by Mehdi Hasan, and to identical tunes. One misses her own interpretation of the shades of meaning in the verse. The last number *Dub Gayi Sab Yadein* is probably the best because the tune suits both the sense of the verse and the quality of Runa Laila's voice.

Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh are presented in a live recording of their concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London. The two discs in the album are recorded on 16 tracks by Manor Mobile and the sound quality is very good. The *gazel-s* are interspersed with an introduction to the singers by Chamanlal Chaman, to the accompanists by Jagjit Singh and with a few *latife* (also told by him) between *sher-s*. There is also the sound of the audience clapping to the beat of the percussion. Popular *gazel-s* and film songs are included in the album. Some *gazel-s* are fully sung; while, in the case of others, only the *matla* is sung and the rest of the composition has been deleted in the editing process. On the whole, the presentation and the quality of the singing is good and the album will most likely be a favourite of the duo's fans.

CBS presents this same husband-wife team in some more recent *gazel-s* and *nazm-s*. Chitra Singh's voice is a single reed, high-pitched, yet sweet, and blending with the deep timbre of Jagjit Singh. The tunes here, particularly the last *nazm* on Side A, resemble their earlier songs. The rhythm, in the second number on Side A, is close to that of Khaiyyaam's popular film hit *Kabhi Kabhi*.

Speaking of Khaiyyaam, there is a disc of his music for *Razia Sultan*. Lata Mangeshkar's song in Bhairavi, with its distinct flavour of Arabic music, appears on two of the four sides of the album. The appeal of the song lies in Lata's expressive voice, the dramatic silences and some good *santoor* playing at various intervals. Lata's lullaby, too, is full of dramatic effects created by laughter and whispers. The song and *tarana* in Bageshree (rendered in chorus by Parveen Sultana, Sulakshana Pandit and others) is, on the whole, pleasing in spite of the fast *taan* passages which sound rather too shrill, even jarring. Kabban Mirza's two songs are disappointing. Kamal Amrohi, the film's director, himself recites a few verses in his low-pitched, sombre voice with a chorus for background.

The disc from the sound-track of *Sadma* has lyrics by Gulzar and presents Kamal Hasan as 'a sensational singer'. The 'song' is mostly a narrative and the few lines which are sung can hardly be said to emanate from 'a sensational singer'. Actually the real 'singing' is by Suresh Wadkar (who sings with equal ease a Jazz-type song and *alap-s* in Chandrakau in the classical style), by Yesudas (who endows his music with a graceful *liit* and sweetness) and by Asha Bhonsle (who maintains her usual high standard). The music composed by Ilaiyaraaja follows the conventional pattern of Hindi film music.

A word about the 'exotic' phrasing used on the sleeve jackets. In *Lit on Sitar*, the words *Melody on the Move* are used to describe a *jhala* piece where rhythm and not melody predominates!

—SARALA BHIDE



Vyjayantimala's *Bharata Natyam*, a 2-LP album providing a guideline for a full two-hour Bharata Natyam recital, is a commendable effort. In the self-instructor (accompanying the album), Vyjayantimala offers students of music and dance the text of the composition (in Roman script), its meaning, and meticulous notation for the *teermanam*-s as also for the *adavu*-s so that they can be synchronised with what is heard on the disc. And, in the album itself, Vyjayantimala's *Nattuvangam* is superb.

It goes without saying that only a student who is familiar with the Bharata Natyam system can understand the notation and choreograph the *adavu*-s in a pleasing manner. For instance, just mentioning the name of the *adavu* (*Tattai Ta Ha Tai*) is not enough. It indicates the measure of time but does not signify which *Tattai Ta Ha Tai*. All the *adavu*-s which come under this group may not blend with the *adavu* which follows. In the hands of a novice, the results may be far from agreeable.

In the case of *Abhinaya* there is, of course, a more serious difficulty. Unless the student is versatile enough to depict a variety of *Sanchari bhava*-s, the effort may not produce the desired results.

The production side of the album is quite satisfactory but, with closer attention to details, a few errors could have been avoided. For example, in the *Thodaya Mangalam*, the Maya Malava Gaula composition is set in *Roopaka talam* and not in *Mishra Chapu* (as mentioned in the text). While the *mridangam* plays *Tattu Mettu*, for the *madhyama kala* of the *padam* in *raga Atana* (*Ippadi Allo Vandu*), the notation in the text does not make any mention of its presence. There are also slight pronunciation differences in the words of the *Ahiri padam* and the *Saurashtra* number.

The *Todi* piece, which is described as *Sorkattu*, is popularly termed *Jatiswaram* and *swara*-s are also usually sung. Another slight deviation is after the last *pada* of the *Purvangam* of the *Varnam*, there is no *teermanam* but the music proceeds with the *Chittaswaram*. These comments are just minor reservations, not intended at all as a criticism of the format of the numbers.

On the whole, this album will serve a very useful purpose for practice and rehearsals and occasionally for concerts.

—PADMALOCHANA NAGARAJAN

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